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Editorial Director Michael Molenda, mmolenda@nbmedia.com
Editor Brian Fox, bfox@nbmedia.com
Consulting Editor Karl Coryat
Senior Contributing Editors E. E. Bradman, Chris Jisi
Contributing Editor Ed Friedland
Staff Writer Jimmy Leslie

Art Director Paul Haggard
Production Manager Amy Santana

Publisher Joe Perry
jperry@nbmedia.com, (212) 378-0464
Advertising Director Northwest, Midwest, Canada & New Business Development Greg Sutton
gsutton@nbmedia.com, (925) 425-9967
Advertising Director East Coast & Europe Jeff Donnenwerth
jdonnenwerth@nbmedia.com, (770) 643-1425
Advertising Director Soutwest Mari Deetz
mdeetz@nbmedia.com, (650) 238-0344
Specialty Sales Adverting Michelle Eigen
meigen@nbmedia.com, (650) 238-0325

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Please direct all advertising and editorial inquiries to:
Bass Player, 1111 Bayhill Drive, Suite 125, San Bruno, CA 94066
(650) 238-0260; FAX (650) 238-0261; bassplayer@nbmedia.com

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Bass Player, P.O. Box 469069, Escondido, CA 92046-9069. For quickest service, telephone: 800-234-1831 or (760) 291-1537. bassplayer@pcspublink.com
List rental: (914) 925-2449, danny.grubert@lakegroupmedia.com

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LOWDOWN

BRIAN FOX

From The Mouths Of Babes

MUCH AS I REGARD THE TASK OF WRITING OF THIS COLUMN AS AN INCREDIBLE HONOR, I admit it can sometimes be rough. I mean, one can ramble on about the state of bass and what it all means for only so long, right? So, for inspiration this time around, I turned to my two-year-old daughter, herself something of a bass expert, given how much of her life she's spent watching Daddy schlep gear and pull his hair out writing and editing stories about all things bass. Here was our exchange, verbatim.

"Maddy, what should I write about?"

"To Mommy?"

"No, about bass."

[*Furrows brow in deep thought*] "About how much you love to play it?"

"Thanks, babe. Eat your peas."

Indeed. I owe the kid big. It's not just that she's offered her editorial expertise *gratis* (though by doing so, she's just earned an extra strawberry). My gratitude goes far deeper, and for reasons she can't yet—but I imagine many of you certainly can—understand. Last night, I had an especially brutal rehearsal with a band that's experiencing the kind of drama better suited to daytime television than any worthwhile recreational activity. And tomorrow I'll drive for six hours to pull a marathon set at a casino gig with said band—one that pays well, if not for the exorbitant tax it takes on my soul, playing long hours for an audience that cares far less about your music than they do about their pipedream of hitting it big on the penny slots.

I know I've never told my daughter that I love playing bass. She just *knows*. Nailing that tricky lick? Sure, that feels good. Filling a room with luscious low end? Yeah, pretty sweet. Loving your craft so much that you telepathically communicate that joy to a child? Trump. This weekend, as I hit traffic snarls, play peacemaker to bickering bandmates, and watch glazed masses of unlucky folk piss away their pension checks, I know what I'll be thinking. Thanks, kid.

COURT OF OPINION

If you could choose to jam with John Bohnam, Keith Moon, Dave Grohl, or Neil Peart, who would you pick?

Join the conversation at facebook.com/bassplayermag.

Peart, hands down. The others are great, but a Peart they will never be! **—Chad Ballentine**

Neil Peart is easily the greatest drummer of all time and not just in rock & roll, people! **—Jd Sumone**

Neil Peart, hands down.
—Fred Race

No contest. Peart is a great drummer, but Bonham was amazing. He changed how the drums were played more than any person I can think of. Bonham was to drums what Entwistle was to the bass. **—Ronald Ward Jones**

Bonham, Bonham, Bonham—all day long. If a bass player could create what would be the perfect drummer, Mr. Bonham would be the end result. **—John Gowrie**

Hands down, Bonham. Then I'd have a beer with Dave Grohl and go on a motorcycle ride with Neil Peart, all the while thinking about Keith Moon's funny drumming on the *Smothers Brothers* show. **—Peter Cottone**

For me? Moonie all the way. **—Pyrat John Hodges**

Keith Moon is so not my style. Consequently, I would have a great deal to learn by jamming with him. He's my choice!
—Bob Mirro

They're all unique and great, but Keith has that special blend of heart and complete surprise, and I'm sure the other drummers listed here would agree. His playing was irrational, loud, sloppy, and fun—and it worked! Oh, sorry ... I'm not a bass player. Never mind! **—Dan Russell David**

Dave Grohl, rock & roll everyman. JPJ and McCartney jam with him—good company. **—Ron Kelley**

I have a ton of respect for Dave. He has to be my favorite all-around musician working today. But as a drummer, he's not in the same league as John, Keith, and Neil. I bet even he would say so. **—Gil Carter**

Is there a way we can extract the DNA from each of these individuals and create a new monster drummer?
—Townsend MB

TIMELINE

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This Month In Bass: June

2nd Bassist, producer, bandleader, and educator Matthew Garrison born, **1970**.

4th Sting and the Police begin a four-week run at the top of the UK charts with "Every Breath You Take," **1983**.

5th Punk icon and Ramones bass man Dee Dee Ramone dies, **2002**.

6th Session stalwart and Chapman Stick pioneer Tony Levin born, **1946**; Slayer's Tom Araya born, **1962**. Isley Brothers bassist Marvin Isley dies, **2010**.

8th Bill Wyman releases *Monkey Grip*, the first solo album by a Rolling Stone, **1974**.

13th Bolstered by stellar bass work from Nathan East, Marcus Miller, and Randy Jackson, Whitney Houston's *Whitney* album rocks the top of the charts, *1987*. Flea's upfront bass line on "You Oughta Know" helps push Alanis Morissette's *Jagged Little Pill* to No. 1, **1995**.

14th Bassist, producer, and session king Marcus Miller born, **1959**.

16th Suzi Quatro has her first No.1 single with "Can the Can," **1973**.

17th Studio bass icon and educator Chuck Rainey born, **1940**.

18th Songwriter, bass god, and former Beatle Paul McCartney born, **1942**.

20th Beach Boys leader and sometime live bassist Brian Wilson born, **1942**; Van Halen bassist and harmony vocalist Michael Anthony born, **1955**; Duran Duran bass man John Taylor born, **1960**.

23rd Jazz bass master and photographer Milt Hinton born, **1910**; studio titan, harmonic innovator, and 6-string bass father Anthony Jackson born, **1952**.

25th The Beatles start a two-week run at the top of the U.S. singles chart with "Paperback Writer," **1966**. Thanks to John Lennon demanding to know why the bass on a certain Wilson Pickett record was much louder than the bass on any of the Beatles' records, Paul's bass parts are louder than usual.

26th Bop and avant-garde jazz bassist and New School professor Reggie Workman born, **1937**.

27th John Entwistle dies in Las Vegas one day before the Who begins touring, **2002**.

30th Fusion, jazz, and funk icon Stanley Clarke born, **1951**. He releases his hit album *School Days* in June **1976**.

THE REAL WORLD

Sam Warshaw

Home base Fort Lauderdale, Florida
Occupation Professional bassist and arranger
Gigs Headline entertainer in the cruise industry and session player
Basses Fender American Jazz Bass and 4-string Marcus Miller Jazz Bass
Rig Gallien-Krueger 4x10 and 1x15
Strings, etc. D'Addarios, .040–.105
Heroes & inspiration Victor Wooten, Regi Wooten, Larry Graham, Prince, Michael Jackson, Sting, Marcus Miller, Patti LaBelle, Rickey Minor, Tina Turner, and David Foster, to name a few
Contact facebook.com/swarshaw1011

How did you come to play bass?

I started by accident when I was about 11 years old. I was in band playing French horn, and the director needed a bass player for jazz band, so I took the opportunity!

What's a lesson you've learned along the way?

Music is a journey that never ends, especially as a career. It's great to make goals for yourself, but you have to be willing to take the journey and see where it takes you.

What are your musical goals?

My dream gig is to hold a spot on a late-night show like Leno or Letterman, but right now, my goal is to continue growing my entertainment company, which produces acts in the cruise industry.

Want to introduce yourself? Find submission guidelines at bassplayer.com/realworld. Get selected for The Real World and receive a set of D'Addario EXL170 bass strings and a T-shirt. All those who submit will receive D'Addario's FretBuzz newsletter.

DIG MY RIG!

BEING A SOUTHPAW MAKES FINDING A DECENT BASS A challenge. When I started playing the bass in the summer of 1990, I first did the Hendrix thing by flipping the strings on a right-handed bass. Of course, this is far from ideal, especially for a fingerstyle player: I kept turning down the volume unintentionally with my left hand. This prompted the search for an actual left-handed bass. On the far left of the picture you'll see an early '90s, off-white Charvel with Jackson elements, my first genuine lefty bass. It's a passive P/J that served its purpose for several years, but I eventually replaced it.

As my financial status improved, so did my lust to buy a better bass. This was before the advent of Internet bass forums, so I spent many an afternoon talking basses with Paul Sips, owner of Paul's Bass Matters in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. In the end, I settled on a custom a 4-string built by German luthier Sandberg, who gives left-handers all the same options as right-handed players and without extra charge. It's truly an excellent-sounding bass with two humbuckers, 3-band active EQ, flame-maple top, and a personalized infinity symbol inlay on the 12th fret. Two years later, I bought another Sandberg, this time a double-humbucker 5-string; the lows on this one are truly gut-wrenching. It has Sandberg's signature zebra-stripes milled out of its ash body, with a red finish and pearloid pickguard. And I recently fulfilled my lifelong dream of owning an original MusicMan Stingray. The vintage sunburst, single-humbucker, tortoise pickguard bass is seen on the far right.

As for amplification, having had only combos for practice at home and borrowing stuff for gigs, about a year ago I was fed up with this dependency on others and decided to buy a Gallien-Krueger rig—this setup soiled my pants the moment I tested it. The Fusion 550, accompanied by a 2x12 Neo cab, is incredible: clear, crisp tone, louder than hell, and it delivers both funky slap tones as well as metal growls. I can honestly say this is the best money I ever spent on bass gear!

Although sometimes I still envy right-handed players who can walk into a music store and play different instruments off the rack, I could not be happier with the rig you see here (picture by Ronald van Maaren). Besides, lefties do it right!

—ARNO KONING, THE NETHERLANDS

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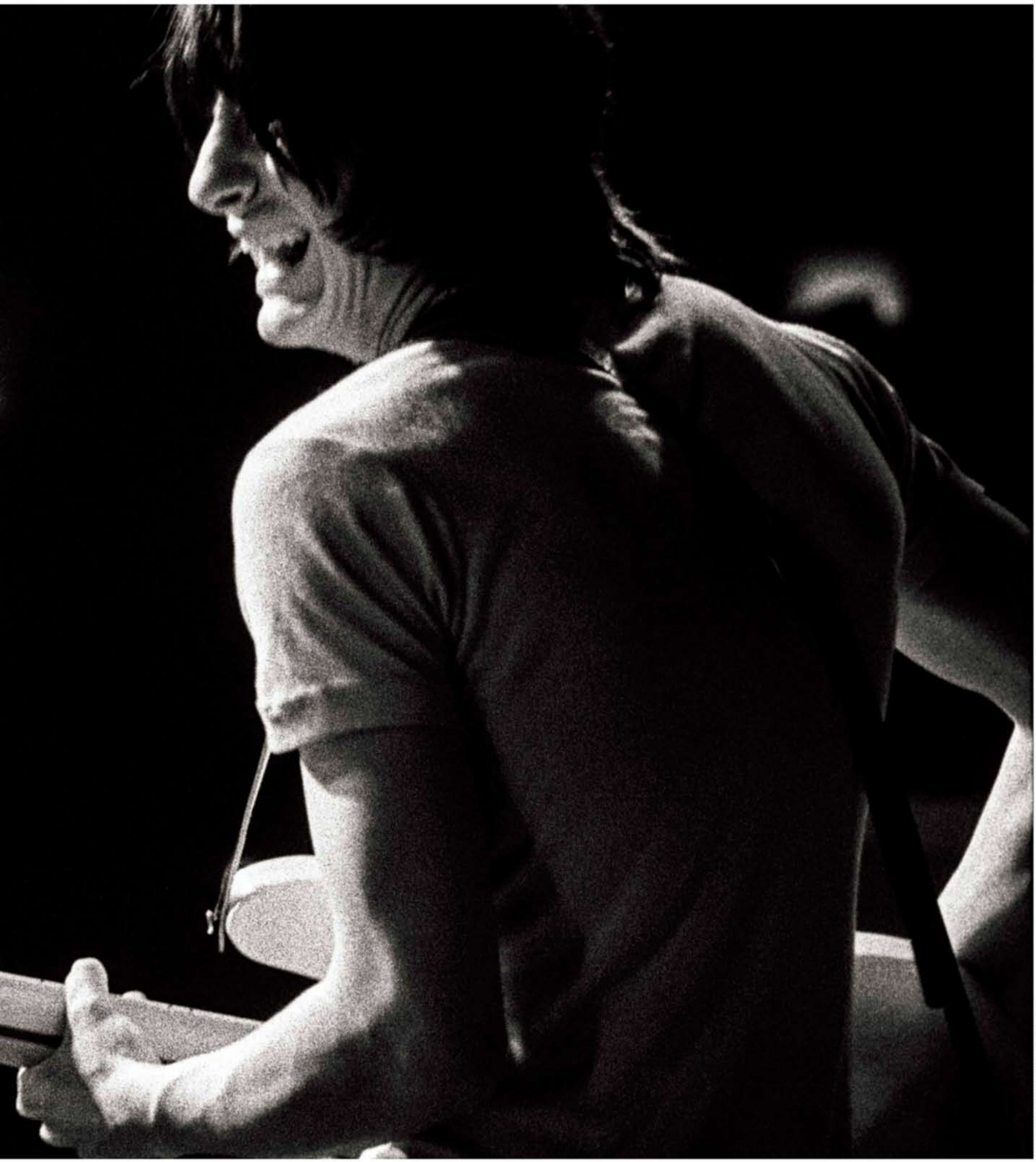
EXPO

Pickin' & Grinnin'

Before he joined the Rolling Stones in 1975, Ronnie Wood rocked a mean bass guitar—a '68 Fender Telecaster Bass—with the Jeff Beck Group. Fillmore West, 1968.



BARON WOLMAN / ATLAS ICONS

BASS NOTES

FISHTANK ENSEMBLE, ATOMIC SUNSET

Djordje Stijepovic On The Art of Upright Slap

BY JIMMY LESLIE | PHOTOGRAPH BY SLOBODAN NIKOLIC

SERBIAN TRANSPLANT DJORDJE STIJEPOVIC is one of the world's premier upright slap bass players and ambassadors. Formerly a member of the Head Cat with Lemmy Kilmister and ex-Stray Cats drummer Slim Jim Phantom, Los Angeles-based Stijepovic currently applies oodles of upright elements to his rock & roll band Atomic Sunset, and blends slap into global sounds in the world music outfit Fishtank Ensemble. Other credits include Wanda Jackson, Dale Hawkins, and "almost every living rockabilly player from the '50s, including DJ Fontana and Scotty Moore." Stijepovic puts upright in intriguing context when he performs bellydance/bass duets with dancers Rachel Brice and Mira Betz. Stijepovic is the founder of artofslapbass.com, a resource for upright aficionados that includes a forum and interviews with seminal slappers such as Marshall Lytle of Bill Haley & the Comets.

How did you become a slap-bass freak, and was it always about acoustic for you?

It was always about acoustic for me. When I was about ten years old I heard early Elvis Presley and Stray Cats recordings, and I instantly fell in love with that magical percussive bass sound. A few years later, my music school lent me an upright, and the first thing I did was slap.

How did you develop your own upright slap style?

At first I tried to copy my favorite rockabilly licks, and then I gravitated deeper into the past researching old jazz, blues, country, and gypsy recordings. At the same time, I was listening to punk, metal, and studying classical music. I incorporate everything. I often use licks I learned from Romanian gypsy music when I play rockabilly, or throw in some New Orleans jazz licks when I play Balkan music. I do it all with a punk edge—my personal touch.

Can you detail the old-school slap style that you draw so heavily from, and cite some examples?

Steve Brown, Willie Dixon, Milt Hinton, and Joe Zinkan definitely informed my style. I tried to incorporate all their licks, but the most important thing I learned from them is the kind of feel and groove that is often lost in modern, heavily edited mainstream music. Other than a few exceptions such as Brown's playing on Jean Goldkette Orchestra's "Dinah," most players were using single, double, and triple slaps until the late 1940s. Just the string hits the fingerboard on a single slap. On a double, the string hits the fingerboard once and the palm hits it once. For a triple slap, the string hits the fingerboard once, and the palm hits it twice.

More advanced bassists such as Milt Hinton used quadruple slaps where the string hits the fingerboard once and the palm hits it three times—Cab Calloway's "Pluckin' the Bass" is a good example. Willie Dixon had his own way of playing quadruple slaps. He used two double slaps, muting the second note with his fretting hand. Check out the Big Three Trio's "Hard Notch Boogie Beat." Joe Zinkan played very nice melodies using roll slap in bluegrass and country music. Check out Johnnie & Jack's "I Never Can Come Back to You."

It's interesting that slap on the upright bass almost completely disappeared from the '60s to the '80s, when it made a comeback in rockabilly music. Upright slap has evolved a lot in the recent years; it's become a complex, advanced technique. I'm still learning and constantly working on improving my style.

Can you detail where modern slap is right now and how you are moving it forward?

The core is still single, double, triple, and quadruple slaps, but there are many other licks involved as well. I like using roll- and pull-off slap patterns such as the ones you can hear on Fishtank Ensemble's "Nedim." I also like slapping in odd time signatures such as 7/8 or 11/8. Examples include Fishtank Ensemble's "Djordje's Rachenitza" and "Ceklin," respectively. Using double-stops the way I do on Atomic Sunset's "Atomic Boogie" is another recent development in upright slap.

People are finally starting to realize that upright slap is not just a hillbilly style—that it should be accepted as one of the official upright bass techniques next to arco and pizz.

JIMMY LESLIE

Djordje Stijepovic with Fishtank Ensemble singer Ursula Knudson at San Francisco's Café du Nord

With the development of the internet, slap players are finally able to share knowledge and licks.

Can you offer some gear thoughts pertaining to the history of upright slap?

Bass companies didn't pay much attention to upright slap players for a long time. With regular pickups it's hard to have a balance between core and slap tones. The major change happened when Jason Burns started King Double Bass, and it progressed when he started Blast Cult. Their One4Five basses, coupled with the amazing Channel Blaster pickup system, finally enable full control of the core tone and the click of the slap.

Can you offer some insights on your bass?

Blast Cult custom made my main bass, the "Great White," with a 3-pickup system: a Monolux piezo on the bridge for the natural acoustic tone, a slap piezo behind the fingerboard for the slap click, and an active EMG magnetic pickup on the bottom of my fingerboard for an extra boost. I send all that through a Mogami TRS [3-conductor] cable to the Channel Blaster, where I blend and EQ the signals, and then I send the blended signal to an amp or direct.

In the studio I use a Mojave Audio MA-200 in front of the *f*-hole and an MA-100 pointed toward the fingerboard. Since I started playing Blast Cult basses I've incorporated a direct signal as well.

What are your thoughts on how upright slap relates to electric slap bass?

It's a completely different beast. Electric slap bass technique developed almost completely independently from upright. The original upright slappers possibly influenced early electric players, but nowadays most electric bass players are not even aware that the slap technique started 50 years earlier on acoustic basses. **BP**

INFO

LISTEN

Fishtank Ensemble, *Woman in Sin* [Fishtank, 2010]; Atomic Sunset, *Hot Rods & Pin-Ups* [Ceklin Music, 2007]

EQUIP

Basses Blast Cult One4Five custom upright
Rig Blast Cult Channel Blaster pickup/preamp system direct to house or to Orange Terror Bass head, Aguilar DB 410 or DB 412 cabinets (live), Mojave Audio MA-200 and MA-100 mics (studio), Mogami TRS cables
Strings Thomastik Belcanto Gold (prototype) or Spirocore mediums

CONNECT

Watch awesome video of Blast Cult building Stijepovic's bass, the "Great White," and dig Djordje's and Mira Betz's bass and bellydance routine. **bassplayer.com/june2013**

ALLEN ROSS THOMAS

SEVENTH WONDER

Andreas Blomqvist

6-String Wonder

BY FREDDY VILLANO

UTILIZING A 6-STRING BASS AND AN ARRAY OF TECHNIQUES that include tapping and arpeggio sweeps, Andreas Blomqvist is churning it out for a new generation of head-banging bass players. Unlike many other bands in the progressive metal genre, where the guitar is the primary source of material, Blomqvist is forging a path not only as a virtuoso bassist, but also as one of the primary songwriters in his band, Seventh Wonder.

What's your approach to recording bass?

On *The Great Escape*, we used a blend of the line out from my amp and a mic on the speaker cabinet. I always throw in a direct signal, as well, just to give whoever does the mix something clean to work with if he wants to re-amp.

When in the process do you cut your bass tracks?

On the first album I did it straight after the drums. Since then, we do drums, keyboards, and then bass, then hit the rhythm guitars. The benefit of having the keyboards there, especially when you do as I do, playing a lot of stuff up high on the neck, intonation can be tricky. With the keyboard pads or chords in place, you can make sure you're spot on, intonation-wise.

When you talk about intonation, are you playing fretless?

No, I'm not. In my experience, especially with a 6-string, you can be more in tune with open strings, but out when you're up noodling up high. And if you're trying to pick chords and you want them to ring through, it's not always perfect. Sometimes I end up re-tuning in the range I'm playing. But that's been less of an issue with my MTD.

You have a unique approach to playing arpeggios.

I never liked what I heard anybody doing on bass in terms of arpeggios. I think it sounded too much like strumming chords or dead notes; I wanted to sound fluid and clear, so I spent a lot of time developing my own technique. I'm playing something that looks a little more like classical guitar technique in my right hand. If I'm playing an ascending *A* minor line with two notes on the first string, I'm using a downstroke with the thumb to pick the root note, then a hammer-on to the 3rd, then continue across the strings ascending with my fingers and then rake it back down. So I always start the sequence with the thumb.

Who is your biggest influence?

Thomas Miller, who plays on the first Symphony X album. His bass is very audible, and you can clearly hear it and distinguish what's going on. The things that he did, in my mind, had never been done before. I'm still surprised to this day I don't hear more people mention him. He was definitely a big foundation for the way I play today. **BP**

INFO

LISTEN

Seventh Wonder, *The Great Escape* [Lion Music, 2010]

EQUIP

Basses MTD custom 6-string, fretless MTD Kingston 6-string
Rig EBS Fafner head, EBS ProLine 4x10 and 1x15 cabinets
Strings EBS Stainless Steel, .025–.125

CONNECT

Check out Andreas recording a bass solo in 2006. **bassplayer.com/june2013**

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Jeremy Davis, center

PARAMORE

Jeremy Davis

Paramount Sound

BY JON D'AURIA

WHEN THE SONG "MISERY BUSINESS" HIT AIRWAVES IN 2007, the alternative world paused to take notice of the poppy yet powerful sound coming from a young Tennessee band named Paramore. Jeremy Davis and his bandmates spent the next few years cutting their teeth on the road, all while churning out records that documented their sonic evolution.

Following the departure of the band's original drummer and lead guitarist, Paramore entered the studio as a trio in early 2012. Davis felt immense pressure to raise the bar, but he knew that his outfit needed to find a new identity in order to survive. "Our band isn't a wall-of-guitar sound anymore," says Davis. "We have a different formation now where the bass has a high importance on every song. A lot is required of me."

Fortunately, the band brought in bassist/producer Justin Meldal-Johnsen to help develop Davis' tone. JMJ came through, and Jeremy's presence on Paramore's self-titled album is his most commanding yet, featuring masterfully crafted distorted lines, big-bodied clean tones, and even a rare pinch of slap bass.

What was it like working with Justin, a fellow bass player?

It was amazing to work with JMJ. I feel like a lot of producers have so much digital equipment nowadays that they want to do everything through the computer. Some spend minimal time on bass, but JMJ would really get down and dirty with me, trying different pedals and amps. I couldn't even tell you some of the things we did, because we had so many channels running; it was like a confusing fantasyland.

Can you recall any of his methods?

Sometimes we'd have two DIs going; one would go to one of my Ashdown heads and the other would go into an old-school Traynor guitar amp for nasty, gritty sounds. It made me realize how much you can put into customizing bass tone.

You get some serious distorted tone on "Fast in My Car."

We wanted the bass and its tone to carry that song. For that, we had a signal going to my head, another to a Traynor amp, and another through an octave pedal and an Ampeg B-15—on top of all the distortions and fuzz pedals we used. That is my favorite tone I've ever gotten, and I'm so happy that that's the first song on the album.

The funky slap bass on "Ain't It Fun" is something new for Paramore.

Part of my personality as a bassist is that I started in funk music. For years I neglected the funky side of my playing, but for this song I rediscovered it. When we got to the end section I said, "Guys, you know I'm going to rip up some slap bass on this part." And JMJ told me that if I was going to do it, I needed to come correct. So I kicked the chair away, the groove of the song took me, and I just played what I needed to play.

Do you feel that you matured as a player in this process?

I would definitely pinpoint this record as a major place of growth as a bass player. I used to think my stage presence was the most important element; I would go wild and jump all over the place because I thought that was my identity. But this record was a rediscovery for me, and now I'm focusing on my playing and knowing that it is what defines me. **BP**

INFO

LISTEN

Paramore, *Paramore* [Fueled By Ramen, 2013]

EQUIP

Basses 1980s Gibson Grabber Basses
Rig Ashdown ABM 900 EVO III heads, custom Ashdown 8x10 cabinet, Ashdown ABM-215EVO3 2x15 cabinet
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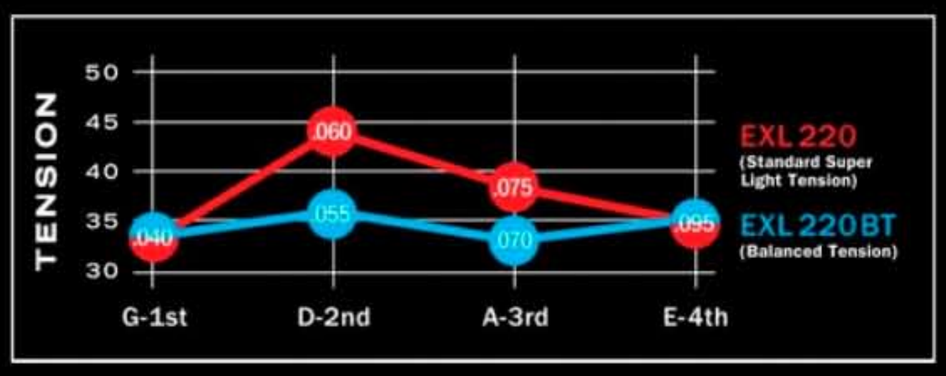

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BP RECOMMENDS

JANEK GWIZDALA
THEATRE BY THE SEA
[janekgwizdala.bandcamp.com]
The pen is mightier than the 'board. For his fifth solo CD, **Janek Gwizdala** moves the focus from his Fodera 5-string to his heartfelt, intimate compositions, which are impeccably cast with an intriguing mix of right- and left-coast musicians who have influenced Gwizdala's musical persona. "Portugal" sets the pace: With Peter Erskine and Alan Pasqua in their disc-long role on drums and piano, and Janek mirroring their minimalist support, Lizzy (daughter of Fourplay guitarist Chuck) Loeb's airy, wordless vocals give way to Mike Stern's featured guitar. And so it goes, with undersung Stern/Yellowjackets saxophonist Bobby Franceschini featured on the gentle, nylon-guitar-tinged "Espana"; Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra trombone titan Elliot Mason burning up the brooding "Fooling Houdini"; Pasqua claiming the soul-dipped title track; Randy Brecker stepping out over Gwizdala's funky-but-finessed muted groove on "Randroid"; and young Brooklyn guitar phenom Nir Felder widening eyes on "Chicago Opener." Attuned to the blowing bliss he establishes for his bandmates, Janek takes the spotlight on the Chick-ish "Erdnase" with a spanning, storytelling solo that leaves us wanting more. This time around, the compositions come first. —CHRIS JISI

DAVID BOWIE
THE NEXT DAY
[Columbia]
Like the CD cover, **Gail Ann Dorsey**'s sumptuous lines on seven of this album's 14 songs contain sly references to Bowie classics, but they're also a showcase for the chemistry she and the Thin White Duke have honed over the last 18 years. The rest of the tracks are expertly supported by veteran Bowie producer **Tony Visconti** and the inimitable **Tony Levin**, who contributes a gorgeous part to "Where Are We Now" and more than a few drops of funky Chapman Stick magic to "Boss of Me." —E.E. BRADMAN

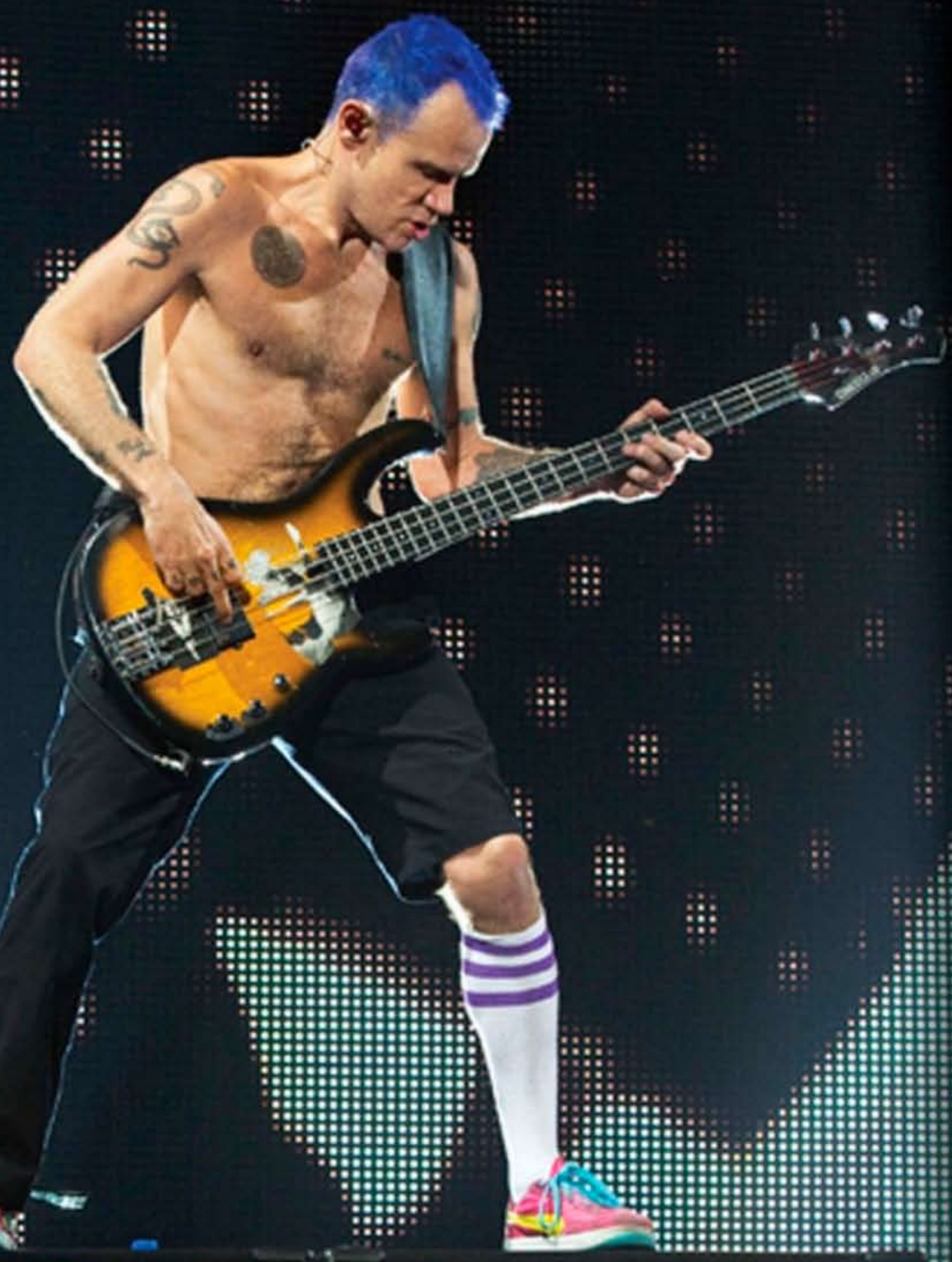
SUICIDAL TENDENCIES
13
[Suicidal Records]
Long before he was blowing up dancefloors and headphones as a solo artist and with Erykah Badu and Flying Lotus, **Steve "Thundercat" Bruner** was a young punk who succeeded Robert Trujillo in Suicidal Tendencies and spent nine years on the road with this iconic crew of hard-groovin' L.A. mosh-pit kings. On Suicidal's first album in 12 years, Bruner masterfully integrates his trademark 32nd-note flurries and evocative chords while laying it down as if he had been born to thrash. —E.E. BRADMAN

DUST
HARD ATTACK/DUST
[Sony/Legacy]
Before **Kenny Aaronson** became famous for his gigs with A-listers like Hall & Oates, Bob Dylan, the New York Dolls, and Rick Derringer, he was a Brooklyn teenager in Dust, whose two recently reissued early-'70s albums capture his distorted, fierce approach. You can clearly hear him channeling elements of John Entwistle, Jack Bruce, Tim Bogert, and Paul Samwell-Smith, and his pick-driven solo on "Suicide" and the scorcher "Loose Goose" should establish Aaronson's rightful place alongside such heavyweights. —FREDDY VILLANO

PETER HOOK
UNKNOWN PLEASURES: INSIDE JOY DIVISION
[ItBooks/HarperCollins]
Peter Hook's high, droning melodies in Joy Division and New Order redefined rock bass. Considering that the former band's brief lifespan ended with singer Ian Curtis' 1980 suicide, this memoir is surprisingly buoyant. Among other revelations, Hook names his two biggest influences—the Stranglers' Jean-Jacques Burnel (for his tone) and the Clash's Paul Simonon (for his strap length)—and admits that his arresting bass line on "Disorder" is loaded with "bum notes." —MAC RANDALL

CHAD JOHNSON
THE BASS FRETBOARD WORKBOOK: ESSENTIAL MUSIC PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTS FOR FRETBOARD MASTERY
[Hal Leonard]
Whether we need another bass fretboard method—especially one that foregoes notation or tab—is up for debate, but **Chad Johnson**, who has written over 40 instructional books, has a style that's clear and clean. This 100-page tome also sets itself apart with nearly 30 quizzes (with answers), making the book a great way for absolute beginners to visualize and play intervals, scale patterns, triads, and 7th chords. —E.E. BRADMAN

GK



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Contact warwick.de

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Anthrax bass man Frank Bello's new, entry-level signature ESP bass is a vintage, all-black affair. With its basswood body, maple U-shape neck, rosewood fingerboard, 34" scale length, and 21 frets, the FB-204 keeps it old school, but the LDJ (bridge) & LDP (neck) pickups, matched with the ESP's ATB-1 active tone boost, bring it into the 21st Century.

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BY BRIAN FOX

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROSS PELTON

ROSS PELTON

bassist dUg Pinnick released its debut, *Out of the Silent Planet*, in 1988, following up with the powerful *Gretchen Goes to Nebraska* in 1989. On *Faith Hope Love* [1990], *King's X* [1992], and *Dogman* [1994], the band continued to play to its strengths: smart lyrics, lush harmonies, and a heaviness ahead of their time, accomplished via the oracular employment of drop tunings long before the sludgy sea change out of Seattle made the practice commonplace.

Leading from the bottom, frontman dUg Pinnick brought with him a fantastically diverse mixture of ingredients—gospel-tinged vocals, a groove sensibility steeped in R&B, and a penchant for gnarly bass tones. With his frequent use of 12-string basses (slung super low by the terrifically tall southpaw) and bi-amped rigs, Pinnick created one of the most distinctive bass sounds in rock & roll, in and of itself a tremendous achievement.

A prolific songwriter, Pinnick has long collaborated with artists outside of King's X, and his catalog of solo albums continues to grow. That the caliber of his collaborators would be high should be no surprise, but dUg has outdone himself in Pinnick Gales Pridgen, in which he teams up with guitar badass Eric Gales and drummer extraordinaire Thomas Pridgen. As the power trio was preparing to enter the studio—mere months after recording its self-titled Magna Carta debut, dUg took some time to talk shop.

How did the Pinnick Gales Pridgen project come together?

Mike Varney [of Shrapnel Records] called me up and said, "Hey man, do you want to do something with Eric Gales?" I've known Eric for years, and we had always talked about doing something together. So I said, "Hell yeah!" I had just written around 20 songs for my solo record, so I had about ten songs left over. We ended up taking five of my tunes, and we co-wrote the rest of them. We did it all in about 10 days. The fun was in letting everyone do what they do and be themselves, especially with Eric and Thomas.

How does bass factor into your songwriting?

Writing songs on a guitar for the past 20 years, I haven't thought a lot about my bass playing or how to approach it; I'd just put what was needed in the song and keep going. It's stupid, because bass is what I love to do the most. But in the last few years, I've been jamming with a lot of people, and I've been able to just make up bass parts, nothing else. It's brought me back to that place I was when I started making up bass lines and having fun. It's just, Hey, let's get this groove going and dance underneath everybody while they dance on top. I'm really enjoying that.

Let's talk tunes on the PGP album. "Black Jeans" is great, with its haunting chord progressions.

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From the Ground Up: Ray Luzier, Eric Peterson, and Pinnick.

SEBASTIEN PAQUET

I think that's what Eric liked about it when he first heard the demo. I went to that second chord, and he turned his head and went, "Ooh!" Then he stepped up to the plate and took the song where it needed to go. My version was faster—I was thinking of a Johnny Cash kind of twang, but it turned darker. The first thing Tom said after he heard the demo was, "Hey, can we slow it down?" When they did what they did to it, it turned into another animal to get excited about. It's actually my favorite song on the record.

The riff on "Hang On, Big Brother" is pretty killer, too.

That's a hard f'ing thing to play! I'm doubling Eric on the bass, and then I've gotta sing. . . . I tell you, I don't know how I'm going to do this stuff live. But I'm up for the challenge. I come from King's X, where we pull off a lot of crazy-ass shit, so I know it can be done. I've just got my work cut out for me.

Does the band have tour plans?

We're working on it. Nothing's final yet because everybody's busy. But we'll make it happen.

Back to the tunes, the groove on "Angels and Aliens" is deep.

When Eric came up with that riff, all I could hear was the bass line to Sly and the Family Stone's "I Want to Take You Higher." When I started playing like that, Thomas immediately put four on the floor, and we just locked into it.

Aside from Larry Graham, who else do you like to borrow from?

Jamie Jamerson, except I play with such a wiry tone. And Chris Squire, all the time. One of the things I love about him is that he's so funky. On "Roundabout" or "Close to the Edge," he's a f'ing monster—he commands. I try to incorporate that in all my bass playing now. If you're going to be in the background, command the band. Connecting a note or playing staccato or leaving holes literally changes the mood and groove more than anything else in the band.

What gear did you use with PGP?

My Schecter Model T, with custom Seymour Duncan pickups. I have five sets of those pickups, and I put them in whatever bass I'm playing. I've never found pickups that growl quite like them—they're crucial to my tone.

Initially I was thinking that I didn't want my King's X tone—I thought I'd try a new approach, with just an Ampeg SVT. But when I got up to the studio, I realized I hadn't played like that since I was 20 years old, and I just couldn't find the sound I used to love. So I pulled an EQ out of their rack and used an Orange [guitar] amp that was there in the studio, with a miked 4x12 Marshall cabinet.

What about picks and strings?

I use medium picks and DR Strings Hi-Beams. With every other bass string I've used, the low string always goes dead right away. But DRs last a long time.

Just months after releasing *Pinnick Gales Pridgen*, you're going back in to record another album.

This time I don't know what's going to happen, because I'm not going in with any songs. The three of us are going to try to write together; I think it will be even better.

The band is unique in that everybody seems to be a southpaw.

Eric and I play left-handed, and Thomas plays right-handed. The weird thing is that Eric is actually right-handed. When he started playing guitar, his brother was left-handed and played upside down, and he taught Eric to play that way.

And I'm actually ambidextrous—I bat left-handed by throw right-handed, for example. When I bowl, I'll use both hands. It can mess with your brain, because both sides of the brain are dominant, so it can make your brain freeze up. Somebody will say, "Go left," and I'll go right. As for playing bass and singing, that's easy. There are two

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You play with the low strings on top. Have you always played that way?

I started upside down. After about six months, a guy told me it might be easier if I switched it. I just did whatever anybody told me back then, so I switched around. I sometimes wish I hadn't, because then I'd be able to pick up anybody's bass and play it.

It seems as if you never rest from writing. What's your process?

In the last few weeks, I've been mixing my blues band in the mornings, and then I've been putting vocals on another band I have with George Lynch and Ray Luzier from Korn in the afternoons. It's given me a lot more energy just to be really busy. I've played all over the world for a lot of people—I've done a lot. It's not that I don't want that anymore, but writing and recording is just more fun now that I'm older.

You recently relocated from Texas to Los Angeles. What precipitated the move?

I'd been living in Texas, and the music business turned to shit. So I called my brother up and said, "Move into my house." He moved in, and I grabbed my guitars and came out to Los Angeles. I told myself I'd give it five years. I'm going to play with everybody I can, have some fun, make some music, and see if I can get a check coming in every month.

When I got out here, I ran into a lot of people who'd say, "Hey, let's do something." If I can be in a studio making music with somebody, I want to do it. That's been rejuvenating—I feel like I'm a teenager again. The fun part about it is that I've been playing and writing for so long that I'm no longer insecure about things. And the people I've been working with are top-notch, so I'm not in there thinking we're writing a bunch of crap.

King's X was one of the first bands to drop-tune. How did that come about?

Before we got a record deal in King's X [in 1987], Ty played a lot of bluegrass with his dad, and bluegrass often calls for dropped tuning. Ty wanted to write a song that sounded like "She's So Heavy" by the Beatles, so he wrote "Please" in Drop *D*. He played it for us and he said, "This is really different. I don't think it's any good, but I just played something that I felt." When Jerry and I heard it, we looked at each other and went, This is awesome! I went home and drop-tuned my guitar, and I realized how easy it was to play. We both started writing in that tuning, and we've been there ever since.

What's your preferred tuning these days?

I play in Drop C [*CGCF*], and I write everything

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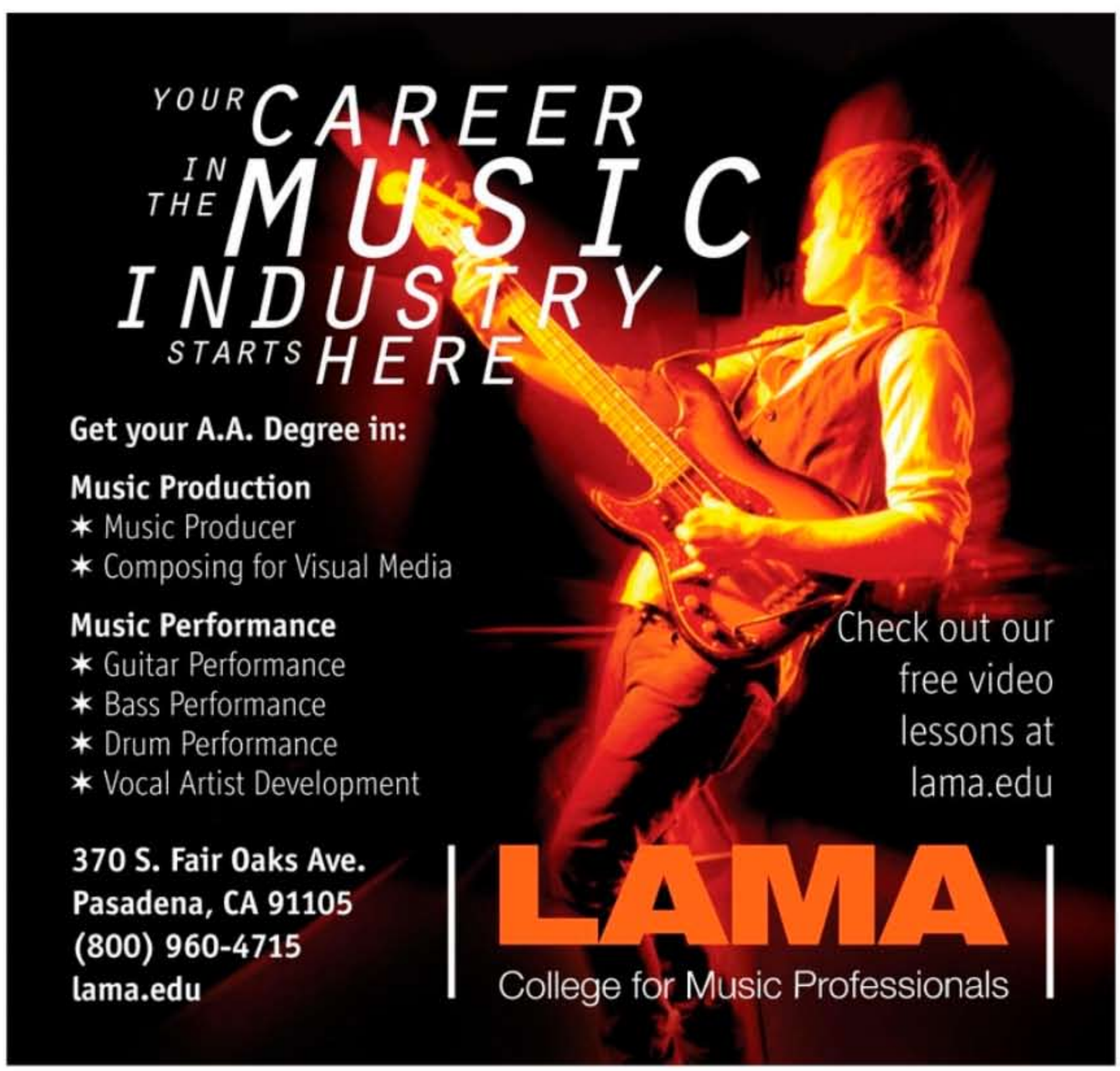

in C or lower. When we started pulling out my demo songs for PGP, they were too low for Eric. He said, "Let me drop my guitar one step, not two." No problem. And that gave it all a different flavor.

Did you start out as a bass player?

I played saxophone for a semester in school when I was 12, and then learned the bass. I was in choir from middle school through college, and I was always in some kind of group that was singing. Bass was a dream. The first time I heard bass I was three years old—it was Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers playing "Why Do Fools Fall in Love" on my cousin's old record player. I liked the vocals, but it was the bass line that got me. From that point on, all I listened to was bass. I played bass for the first time when I was 23, when a friend of mine brought one over and said, "Here, check this out." When I could play my first lick, it was one of the most exciting times I've ever felt in my life. I couldn't give that bass back.

A lot of people identify you with 12-string bass, even though you mostly play 4-string.

I did play it a lot of 12-string on *Faith Hope Love* and *King's X* [1990 and 1992]. I got the idea from Tom Petersson from Cheap Trick. He's the originator, the godfather. King's X was touring with Cheap Trick in 1988 for our first record. Cheap Trick is one of my favorite bands in the whole world, so I was trying to hang out backstage and be cool. At one gig,, right before they went on stage, I said to Tom, "Man, that 12-string is cool." He said, "Check it out," and he took it off and handed it to me. I went, "Dude, I want one of these," and he told me to get in touch with Hamer and ask them to make me one. About six months later, Hamer called Ty and asked if he would play one of their guitars. I called them up and said, "What about me?" They went, "Well of course you, dUg!" So they built me four 12-strings.

Do you still play 12-string?

I try to pull it out on at least one song per record, because everybody wants to hear it and see it.

Why did you move away from 12-string?

I got lazy. One thing about a 12-string is it doesn't work well if you're just playing along with the guitar. You've got to write a song on a 12-string—like Pearl Jam's "Jeremy." But I usually don't pick up the 12-string when I have a song to write. I'll grab a guitar instead. So it just slipped away from me. I wrote "Human Behavior" [*Dogman, 1994*] on a 12-string. That's why it's real minimal and primal. The 12-string has all these harmonic chiming artifacts that turn it into a huge sound.

The instrument is notoriously difficult to

play. Can you offer any pointers?

First off, you need to get the action really, really low, and you have to use light-gauge strings all the way around, even on the bass string. If you're a pick player, you want the little strings on the top, and if you're a fingerstyle player, you want the little strings on the bottom. Because if you hit the big string first, you're going to miss the octave strings.

Whether it's 12-string or 4-string, you have one of the most distinct bass tones in rock & roll. How did you cultivate it?

When I was coming up, I was listening to James Jamerson, "Duck" Dunn, and all those soul players who played fingerstyle and had a nice beefy sound. And then I was really into Sly and the Family Stone and Stevie Wonder, who were playing that percussive kind of sound with a clavinet. When I heard "Roundabout" by Yes, I went, What the hell is that? Here was this clanky clavinet piano sound on a bass—the thing that I love the most. I remember I ran to the music store and said, "How do I get that kind of clangy, twangy sound?" The guy looked at me and said, "What you talking about?" For a year or more I couldn't find that sound; I'd turn all the treble up and all the bass down, but I never could get it right.

Then I read an article in *Circus* magazine with John Entwistle. I had just gotten a glimpse of his live tone [on The Who's *Live at Leeds*], because the bass wasn't as clangy on the Who's studio records. When I heard that tone, it turned my ear. In the article he talked about Rotosound strings, so I went to the store and bought some. They were something like 50 bucks, so I used them until they died—after a week or so.

So I'd found a sound for my bass, but not for my amp. A kid had given me an Ampeg BT-15 with two 1x15" cabinets. They rocked, but they didn't have that *clang* I wanted. One day, another kid showed up where I used to practice when I lived in Florida, and he had a Traynor YBA-1 amp. I plugged into it, and all the sudden, there that sound—*clank*. I traded my Ampeg for the Traynor, and kid looked at me like I was an idiot. But I wanted that sound-I'd found it, and I wasn't about to let it go! I ended up getting seven of those heads, and I used them up to until *Faith Hope Love*. They were pretty old at that point, and I began to move over to other amps. Those Traynors were the key to my tone.

What specifically did you like about them?

They had a crystalline, bright high end that danced around you. I haven't found in any other amp yet-that tone is just gone. I pull out my Traynors and listen now, but I can't get used to it anymore. Times have changed, and sounds have changed. We've gotten bigger, louder, and deeper, so those old Traynors just don't sound right anymore. It's an amazing sound, but there's very little low end.

You've long been a big proponent of bi-amping, using guitar amps for your highs and bass amps for your lows. How did that come about?

I went to a Yes show and saw that Chris Squire had both guitar amps and bass amps. I couldn't afford that, but I kept it in the back of my mind. For the second King's X record [in 1989], I told our manager that I wanted bass and guitar amps, and he got them for me. From that point I experimented with lots of different guitar heads. Mesa Boogie, Fender, Egnater—I've tried a lot. I used an Ampeg SVT for the low end, dialing all the high end out for a fat, compressed sound. The high end on top tells you what the notes are, so you get a solid wall of low end that doesn't step on anything.

How do you view the role of bass tone in a band context?

Bass is the most important instrument, but it's the one that has to figure out how to fit it. Guitar players are married to their sound—you don't want to mess with that. Drums are what they are. Bass is ambient, so you need to dial your sound around the band and still give that audio illusion that you're getting bass in your face.

I've spent years EQing, dialing frequencies in and out. When you put bass through a guitar amp, you just get mud. So you need to take the low end out of that channel and treat it like a guitar. You have to drop out from 4kHz up to 20kHz, because up there is just *clunk*—no sound. Your tone sits between 500Hz and 2kHz. Down low, I keep it flat.

My tone is an animal that needs to be mixed right or it's really annoying. I like the growl to come through, but not to be in your face. A lot of engineers bring the high end up because they think that's what I want, but it's not.

Where does the grind in your tone come from?

The guitar amp. You can turn the gain up to the point where it's just big fuzz, or you can back it up to a place where it's just about to break up. If you do that and put the low end with it, it works really well. The other thing is that the low end has to be compressed really tight. If it's not, the two signals fight each other. That's why I say the low end has to just sit in that one spot and let the high end give you the emotion.

What's your cabinet preference?

There's something about Ampeg 8x10 cabinets that I haven't found in any other bass cab-the

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PHOTO: PETRA RICHTEROVA

consistency of the deep low end. If you're going to use high end, you've got to get deep along with with it. The higher you go, the deeper you've gotta to go. And if you narrow it up, it will just turn into this nasally, ugly thing. They don't make them any more, but I used to use Ampeg SVP-Pro preamps. In the early days, that helped me perfect my tone. I've never been able to get back to that. I'm happy with what I got now, but that was heaven for me.

What's your rig now?

I use a Fractal Axe-FX. I basically programmed my old rig right into it, and now I can't tell the difference. I just run that through my Ampeg power amps and cabinets. Now I can just stick the Fractal in my suitcase and go.

How do you apply compression?

I've found you need to apply compression at the end of any signal; otherwise, you're going to get a weird DI-type sound. Even with my Fractal, I put compression after the speaker emulator, so no matter how big the room is, there's still a compressor squashing the whole thing.

What's happening with King's X?

We're getting ready to do some shows in May and June, and we're going to do a new record sooner or later. We needed a bit of time to evaluate the last 20 years. In recent years, it's been a struggle to make a living on tour and selling records, so we're figuring out what we want to do. We're all proud of each other and encourage each other because we love each other.

When it comes time to tour, what do you need to do to prepare?

For us, if we practice for a couple days then we're good to go for a few months. Even if we have a week or two off, we can still show up and do soundcheck and warm up a little bit and go do it. If it's a longer run, we need to practice for a couple days to reconnect. But a lot of times we don't even have to rehearse. We went to Europe one tour and didn't rehearse. Before the first show, Ty said, "You know, we haven't rehearsed." I said, "I know." He said, "Well, it ain't the first time—we'll wing it." And we went out there and stomped it.

Like Fishbone, and Bad Brains, King's X has long been on the verge of mainstream success, never quite getting there.

When we first came out, people who were really honest said, "Look, you guys are ahead of your time. Just know that." They say there are two things you don't talk about in rock & roll: politics and religion. We talked about both, so there you go. But that's who I am and that's what I do. I'm a hopeless romantic when it comes to doing what I want to do and hoping that somebody will buy it. I can't bow down. I tried. We tried to write pop songs in certain areas in our career, and you know what happened? Nothing. So I'm done with that.

The people that love King's X are deep thinkers. We're unique in where we're coming from—the way that we grew up. I come from a dark place, and there are people that come from that place that understand that loneliness, feeling like you're worthless and that nobody cares. But you're not angry and you don't want to beat everybody up and scream. That's the kind of stuff that I write. The people that grab hold of that are there forever. They'll buy everything I put out, because they know I'm speaking to them as they know I'm speaking to myself about just getting through this f'ed up world. There just aren't enough of them! [*Laughs*].

How is your solo album, *Naked*, coming along?

It's really good. It's coming out in May, and I'm excited about it. All my friends love it. They could be lying to me, but they seem to be more excited about this than anything I've done in a long time.

I'm playing everything on it, and using Toontrack for drums. Lyrically, it's deep. When you move to Los Angeles, in the first couple years you either leave, kill yourself, or suck it up and figure it out. So for the last two years, I just told myself, Hang on, it will straighten out. I did a lot of soul searching, asking how I could get to this point where I can't make a living doing what I'm doing. It was very frustrating. But I've realized that I did and now still do live a great life. I got to live my dream for a second—it doesn't last forever. That was the biggest lesson I had to learn. When you get to the mountaintop, you've got to come back down and let somebody else get up there. I'm okay with that now. The thing that I love is I have enough respect in the music community where I can make music with people, and there's value in the marketplace for at least a little bit.

You're putting the album out yourself?

I actually had a couple of record deals I almost signed with, but at the end of the day I thought to myself, You've written music for fifteen King's X records, five solo records, and however many side projects, and you own nothing. So I decided I wanted to own this record. I got a couple friends together, and we're putting it out on my own label, with a distribution company behind it. Hopefully I'll recoup and pay bills for the next few months. That's good enough for me. I'm really excited about it—you've got to hear it. **BP**

HE'LL TAKE YOU THERE

DAVID HOOD's LEGACY as THE MUSCLE of MUSCLE SHOALS

BY SHELTON CLARK

A PLAYLIST OF DAVID HOOD'S WORK—VIRTUALLY ALL OF it recorded in the Muscle Shoals, Alabama area where he grew up—would cover entire swaths of American music. Not many bassists can claim as eclectic a resumé as Hood, whose percolating lines set a low-end foundation for everyone from Aretha Franklin and Willie Nelson to Shelby Lynne and Frank Black.

As a member of the legendary Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section, a.k.a. the Swampers, Hood and his mates got a shout-out from Lynyrd Skynyrd in the words to "Sweet Home Alabama." They similarly gained long-overdue attention at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival, where a new documentary simply entitled *Muscle Shoals* documents much of the work that Hood and his mates and other area musicians did during the R&B heyday of the 1960s and '70s.

Growing up in Sheffield, just across the Tennessee River from Muscle Shoals, Hood began his own musical journey inauspiciously. "I took piano lessons but wouldn't practice," he says. "Then I played trombone in the high school band but got kicked out of the band for mischief. I saw a local rock & roll band, the first one around here—Hollis Dixon & the Keynotes," he adds. "They had the first electric bass I had ever seen. I was 14 or 15 years old. Later some friends started a band, so by the time I was 18, I bought a Fender Jazz Bass. That was a pretty late start." Fortunately, Hood was a quick study. "It came pretty easy to me. I wasn't a brilliant musician; I'm still not a brilliant musician. I'm not schooled at all. But I don't remember worrying about fret-buzzing and things like that. I just started playing."

Recording a couple of songs with his band at producer Rick Hall's FAME Studios (Florence Alabama Music Enterprises) in Muscle Shoals set Hood on his career path. "I've always considered myself a recording musician more than playing live concerts," Hood says. "Rick knew me and knew I had a bass. Sometimes he would call me to play on a demo or something." The learning curve was swift. Hood's first union-scale recording session was Percy Sledge's "Warm and Tender Love," which became a gold record roughly four years after Hood bought his first bass.

Hits by local favorites Sledge, Arthur Alexander, Clarence Carter, and others started to catch the attention of the national music industry, most notably Atlantic Records' Jerry Wexler. Hood played trombone—not bass—on Aretha Franklin's "I Never Loved a Man," but he played bass on sessions for such R&B stalwarts as Wilson Pickett, Johnnie Taylor, and Etta James. He later played bass on Franklin's "Call Me" and several other tracks.

"FAME had an old [Fender] Bassman amp that had only one speaker in it. We would record it with one of those old RCA 44 mics. When they learned about going direct, they started running me direct and miking me. Inevitably, they'd run out of tracks, so they would lose one of those. Usually the one they would keep was the direct track, so nowadays, I go direct. If I can, I like to have an amp, and they can mic it if they want."

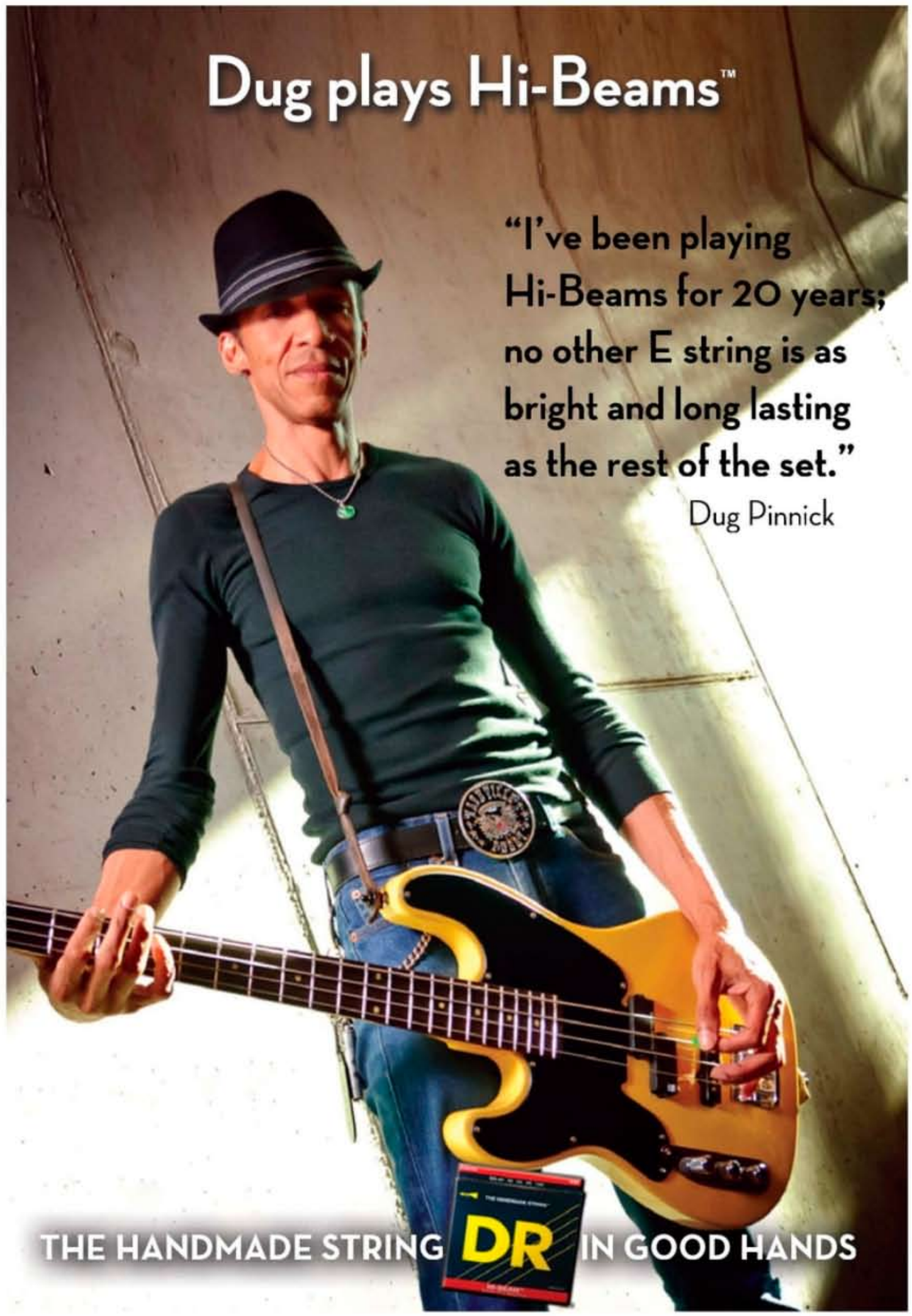
In the late '60s Hood, drummer Roger Hawkins, guitarist Jimmy Johnson, and keyboardist/songwriter Spooner Oldham worked as FAME's primary recording unit. Oldham and Dan Penn, who co-wrote James & Bobby Purify's hit "I'm Your Puppet," departed for Memphis, where they continued their songwriting success with the Box Tops' "Cry Like a Baby." "After Spooner left, we tried some other players, but we knew about Barry Beckett, who had come up with Don Schroeder, the producer of 'I'm Your Puppet.' So we gave Barry a call and said, 'Would you be interested in doing this?' He leaped at the chance, and it was a good fit right from the start."

Like the Funk Brothers of Detroit and Memphis' Booker T. & the M.G.'s, the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section supported innumerable artists anonymously. Hood says, "When I started doing session work at FAME, I knew I'd better learn things like song construction and verse/chorus quickly, so I got everything by the M.G.'s, Otis Redding, Sam & Dave, and the Motown stuff. Booker T. and all the guys were our heroes, but we later became friends. The first time I worked with [M.G.'s bassist] Duck Dunn, I thought, 'Oh, my God!', but he was so cool, and such a nice guy—crazy personality, just a lot of fun." In 2008, the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section and Booker T. & the M.G.'s were inducted into the Musicians Hall of Fame & Museum in Nashville.

Hood, Hawkins, Johnson, and Beckett continued to work at FAME for a period of about two years. "Around that time [1969], a studio became available in Sheffield. The guy who built it really didn't know what to do with it, so he approached Roger and Jimmy about buying the studio. They thought, 'We can't do much in the studio unless we have a rhythm section.' Roger and Jimmy approached Barry and me, so we quit Rick. He had just gotten signed to a record deal with Capitol Records, and he brought us up to his office, in front of the Capitol Records guy, to tell us about this deal, and we said, 'No, we're leaving.' So it was really a bad thing for him." The fallout between Rick Hall and the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section is one of the key stories explored in the new documentary.

Hood is quick to point out: "Rick was Record Producer of the Year the next year with a new rhythm section. So he saw that he could do it without us. But that's when we knew that we were a unit. When we left him and got our own studio, we knew we'd better get good."

They did, and quickly. The 1970s were prime years for Hood and his cohorts, who dubbed their new workspace Muscle Shoals Sound Studio. Hood played on the studio's early successes, including Boz Scaggs' "Loan Me a Dime," which included Duane Allman on guitar, and hit singles like "Take a Letter, Maria" by R.B. Greaves and Mel & Tim's "Starting All Over Again." Island Records' Chris Blackwell brought Jamaican singer Jimmy Cliff to Muscle Shoals to record. Some of the tracks Hood recorded



with Cliff, including the classic "Sitting in Limbo," ended up on the soundtrack of the film *The Harder They Come* and consequently accelerated the worldwide popularity of Jamaican music.

After hearing the Jimmy Cliff sessions, Traffic, which featured Steve Winwood, temporarily enlisted Hood and Hawkins to tour in support of its album *The Low Spark of High Heeled Boys*. Hood and Hawkins stayed long enough to record *Shoot Out at the Fantasy Factory* and the live album *On the Road*. "Bob Marley had just brought out *Catch a Fire*," explains Hood. "Every night before Traffic played a concert, that album was playing over the PA. It just lodged into our psyche or something."

One of pop music's enduring records of the era, the Staple Singers' 1972 classic "I'll Take You There," may be Hood's most familiar recording. It begins with a staccato C on the bass and a snare-drum pop, then launches into the pulsing, reggae-like I–IV groove. When Mavis Staples sings "David!" at the 1:52 mark, Hood launches into a funky, minimalist solo that slides up the neck but stays in the pocket. "That *Be Altitude: Respect Yourself* album is one of my favorites of all time," Hood recalls. "The Staple Singers were fun, too. Three sisters and Pops—we just had a good time with them."

Paul Simon was so impressed that he wanted to capture a similar groove. "I don't know the exact story, but either Paul or his manager called Al Bell [owner of Stax Records] and said he wanted to record with the black Jamaican musicians who played on 'I'll Take You There.' As I understand it, Al said, 'I can give you their number, but they're mighty pale.'" Pallor notwithstanding, Hood and his bandmates helped Simon produce some of the most soulful work of his career. The meticulous Simon had only planned to record "Take Me to the Mardi Gras" at Muscle Shoals Sound, but the musicians' efficiency took him by surprise. "We got it, I think, on the second take. He had three or four days booked, so he sat on the studio floor and played us 'Kodachrome' and a few other things." Hood and company subsequently played on "Loves Me Like a Rock," "Still Crazy After All These Years," and Simon & Garfunkel's "My Little Town." They also lent a hand to seminal works by Bob Seger ("Beautiful Loser," "Night Moves," "Old

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Time Rock and Roll"), Rod Stewart (*Atlantic Crossing*, "Tonight's the Night") and Willie Nelson (the concept album *Phases & Stages*). "Being on the end of the R&B and soul era, that was a lot of fun. Then disco came along, and that just killed it. That's when we started doing more country and pop."

Muscle Shoals Sound later moved to a more modern facility, where the band recorded hits by everyone from the Oak Ridge Boys to Julian Lennon. "Julian wrote the single 'Valotte' sitting in front of our studio—'Sitting on a pebble by the river playing guitar . . . .'" Hood, Beckett, Johnson, and Hawkins sold the studio in 1985, and all but Beckett remained in the Muscle Shoals area. Barry Beckett, who passed away in 2009, found further success as a producer in Nashville.

Lately, Hood's instrument of choice has been a Lakland Joe Osborn model, one of three Lakland basses he owns. From 1976 to 1988, he played an Alembic; he also occasionally plays a Kubicki Factor and a 1957 Fender Precision. (Hood's Jazz Bass was stolen during the Traffic era.) He uses flatwound strings on the Lakland Osborn and the Precision, and roundwounds on the rest. For amplification, he favors a Gallien-Krueger head driving two Ampeg cabinets, each of which has two 12" speakers.

"If there's a tool in my arsenal that's a valuable thing, it's my ability to write [Nashville] number charts," Hood says, adding that he picked up that skill from Beckett. "More than my ability to play fancy stuff is my ability to see a song and visualize it on that chart with those numbers. It's a very simple thing, and I tell young musicians that. It teaches you the structure of a song, but also there's a lot of sure-enough music theory there."

The 69-year-old Hood still works steadily in the studio. He played all the bass tracks on M.G.'s guitarist Steve Cropper's 2011 release *Dedicated*, which included guest appearances from Steve Winwood, B.B. King, Queen's Brian May, and others. Through his association with producer Jon Tiven, Hood has also played on solo albums by the Pixies' Frank Black.

Another of Hood's contemporary projects is *Heat Lightning Rumbles in the Distance*, the second solo record by Drive-By Truckers singer/songwriter Patterson Hood, David's son. Patterson writes, "My father has always been my favorite bass player. We never really ever got to play together until fairly recently; last year, I had a couple of songs that I thought he'd be right for, and he came and played on them. It was one of the most amazing studio experiences of my life. His tone is absolutely fantastic, and he plays beautiful, clean parts—never an extraneous note, just what is needed to hold down the bottom and execute the melody, all with that perfect tone. His performance on the title cut is one of my favorite performances of his, period." Patterson, who framed one of his dad's number charts for the session ("He makes the greatest charts ever"), points to Willie Nelson's *Phases & Stages* as one of David's underappreciated works.

Of the experience recording with Patterson, David says, "I wasn't so sure it would work at first, because I'm used to a more structured situation in the studio. They just go in and work all night on one thing. But it worked out good; I hear the album on satellite radio quite often. And the songs I played on are the ones they play the most, so I guess I helped." **BP**

SOUNDROOM

Fender Pawn Shop Mustang Bass
Warwick RockBass Corvette Basic Medium Scale 5-String
Warmoth Short Scale Series

BY BRIAN FOX

THE OLD ADAGE THAT "LEO GOT IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME" WITH THE Fender Precision Bass is hard to dispute; the combination of styling, ergonomics, and tone from that design forms the core of our consciousness as bass players. But was Leo actually the first to get it right? It's hard to say for sure, but we do know that as early as 1936, the Seattle-based Audiovox Manufacturing company, led by player/builder Paul Tutmarc, introduced its Model 736 electric bass guitar, a funky little number with a solid walnut body, a magnetic pickup mounted under a steel pickguard, and a 30.5" scale length. Only around 100 instruments were made and distributed around the Northwest. Had the bass received wider exposure, perhaps we might have ended up with a different Founding Father of the Electric Bass Guitar.

Leo Fender and partner George Fullerton settled on a 34" scale length after experimenting with shorter (and alonger) scale lengths for the 1951 Precision Bass, but theirs was not the only game in town for long. Gibson's 1953 EB-1 was a 30.5"-scale affair, and the 1956 Höfner 500/1 had a 30" scale length. The production rate of Fender Basses—not to mention their unbeatable tone—went on to set a 34" standard for scale length that continues today. But if popularity of new short- and medium-scale basses hitting this year's NAMM Show floor is any indication, we may be experiencing a sea change in that department. We'll continue to review new 30"- and 32"-scale basses as they become available—we've got orders in for the new Guild Starfire Bass, the Lakland Hollowbody 30, the Ibanez Artcores, and the Blast Cult Thirty2, to name a few—but this month we check out three new stumpy thumpers from Fender, Warwick, and Warmoth.

FENDER PAWN SHOP MUSTANG BASS

Much like the Fano Alt de Facto basses we reviewed last month, Fender's Pawn Shop series seeks to create "guitars that never were but should have been." Of course, the Mustang Bass did exist. (Introduced in 1966, it was actually the last bass designed by Leo Fender before he sold the company and moved on to further revolutionize the instrument at MusicMan and G&L Guitars.) As a bolt-on bass with an alder body, maple neck, rosewood fingerboard, and 30" scale, the Pawn Shop Mustang shares much in common with the original. But while the original featured a split single-coil (like a P-Bass pickup, only smaller), the Pawn Shop Mustang Bass sports a big ol' humbucker in its place.

SPECIFICATIONS

FENDER PAWN SHOP MUSTANG BASS	**Street** $800 **Pros** Huge bottom end, super-easy to play. **Cons** Tug bar finger rest impedes slapstyle playing. **Bottom line** The Pawn Shop Mustang is a beefier-sounding version of an underappreciated vintage classic. **Contact** fender.com	**Construction** Bolt-on **Scale length** 30" **Body** Alder **Neck** Maple **Fingerboard** Rosewood **Width at nut** 1.5" **Pickup** Fender-designed humbucker **Controls** Volume, tone **Weight** 8.7 lbs **Deluxe gig bag** Included **Made in** Mexico
WARWICK ROCKBASS CORVETTE BASIC MEDIUM SCALE 5-STRING	**Street** $650 **Pros** Über-comfy 5-string with scrumptious J-style snap. **Cons** *B* string is more tubby than taut. **Bottom line** Easy on the hands, wrists shoulders, eyes, ears, and pocketbook, this shorty 5-string is hecka hip. **Contact** warwick.com	**Construction** Bolt-on **Scale length** 32" **Body** Alder **Neck** Maple with ekanga veneer stripes **Fingerboard** Rosewood **Width at nut** 1.77" **Pickups** Passive MEC J-style **Controls** Volume, blend, bass, treble **Weight** 9.3 lbs **Options** Left-handed, fretless with tigerstripe ebony fingerboard (no extra charge) **Made in** China
WARMOTH SHORT SCALE SERIES	**Street** $1,110–$1,265 (as tested) **Pros** Wide array of custom options **Cons** Minor assembly issues **Bottom line** The beauty of the Warmoth short scale basses—aside from the fact that you get to assemble them yourself—is the wide range of options available. **Contact** warmoth.com	**Construction** Bolt-on **Scale length** 30" and 32" **Body** Alder **Neck** Maple **Fingerboard** Ebony **Width at nut** 1.5" **Pickups** Seymour Duncan Antiquity II **Controls** Volume, blend, bass, treble **Weight** 30"-scale, 8.5 lbs; 32"-scale, 8.6 lbs **Options** Many; see warmoth.com **Made in** U.S.A.

Fender Pawn Shop Mustang Bass

Warwick RockBass Corvette Basic Medium-Scale 5-String

Warmoth (32" scale)

Having a '74 Fender Musicmaster—a close relative to the Mustang Bass—as a go-to bass around the office, the contours and balance of the Pawn Shop Mustang feel like an old friend (who'd had some work done). With a body size much like an electric guitar and a short scale length, the Mustang is a breeze to play. Without the mass to counterbalance the headstock, the bass neck tends to dive when played while seated, but it's not much of a problem on a strap. The polyester finish on both the body and the back of the neck feels durable, but light enough so as not to obscure the nice alder grain under the 3-Color Sunburst. (The bass is also available in Olympic White and Candy Apple Red, both with a "competition stripe" crossing the body above the bridge.) I dig the look of the "tug bar" finger rest, but it definitely cramps my style when it comes time to slap. Not that the Mustang is much for slapping; the short-scale's low string tension makes for a pretty flaccid slap attack.

Plugged in, the Pawn Shop Mustang Bass makes the added horsepower of the humbucking pickup abundantly clear. Though Fender's bass humbuckers—for example, the neck-position "mudbucker" of the Telecaster Bass—can sound dark and unfocused, the pickup placement here seems to make a big difference, as notes are big, but not boomy. The Pawn Shop Mustang Bass is no Mini-Me P-Bass; it's got a rich, round character that's all its own. The signal is much hotter than with passive Precision and Jazz Basses, and what it lacks in single-coil shimmer it makes up with humbucking thump.

The Pawn Shop Mustang Bass's overall vibe is undeniably old-school. Those looking for pianistic snap in their bass might want to move along, but if it's vintage thump and deliciously loose booty you seek, the Pawn Shop Mustang Bass is a pretty fly shorty.

WARWICK ROCKBASS CORVETTE BASIC MEDIUM SCALE 5-STRING

Short- and medium-scale basses have a lot going for them: there is less of a reach to first position, easing strain on the wrist and shoulder; there tends to be less wood (or other neck materials) on the instrument, further easing shoulder pressure; frets are closer together, shortening the stretch to fight finger fatigue. All these benefits are amplified when it comes to 5- and 6-string basses, a fact that is not lost on Warwick. The company offers a limited number of custom instruments out of its state-of-the-art facility in Markneukirchen, Germany; for those looking for custom-style specs on a budget, Warwick's RockBass offerings are bound to entice.

While most of the other short- and medium-scale

Bass to the 2nd power

Carvin is proud to introduce the $B^2$4 and $B^2$5 Brian Bromberg basses. Designed by Bromberg and Carvin's Custom shop, these instruments employ Brian's dream of a bass that offers great balance, ergonomics and a slim neck with extremely low action. Carvin's new RAD-J single coil radiused pickups and custom preamp circuitry help these basses set a new sonic milestone. Awesome playability, pure and open tone with powerful punch and headroom along with Carvin's vast selection of Custom Shop options takes these basses to the 2nd power.

$B^2$5 shown with
Deep Moss Green on Flame Maple
Graph Tech acoustic Ghost saddles
Black Hardware

$B^2$4 shown with
Deep Honeyburst on Flame Maple
Graph Tech acoustic Ghost saddles
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6 months No interest

basses coming out this year have a vintage styling, sleek and modern is the way for the new RockBass Corvette Basic Medium Scale 5-String. (In addition to the 32"-scale 5-string, Warwick also offers RockBass Corvette Basic 4-strings with 32" and 30.75" scale lengths.) The Basic Medium Scale 5-string is available with either passive or active electronics. For testing, Warwick sent the passive model, which boasts to J-style pickup and a control array of volume, blend, neck tone, bridge tone.

The medium-scale Corvette Basic is undoubtedly one of the most comfortable 5-strings I've played. By shaving just two inches off the reach, the lowest notes on the *B* string become much easier to grab. The Warwick's small body feels more manageable than a bulky old full-size 5-string, and its extended upper horn keeps it from feeling toy-like. Both unplugged and amplified, the Corvette cops the trademark J-style *snap*—with the Basic's basic electronics and with simple technique adjustments, the Corvette can bark and growl with the best of them. Though passive, the MEC single-coils give the Corvette a lot of its bite. It seems this 5-string has lost little of the spring in its step from a slightly lowered string tension. I wouldn't go so far as to call the Basic's *B* string disappointing, but it does sound a bit flabby when compared to, say, the clarion ring of the 35"-scale Ibanez we reviewed last month. Especially when played gingerly, the Basic's *B* string still brings all the low-end info needed for notes to speak clearly.

From headstock to tailpiece, the Corvette is well built; it even features such fancy accouterment as Warwick's Just-A-Nut III bridge, security locks, and fully adjustable, locking saddles. The Corvette's cutaway offers easy access to the first 22 of its 24 frets (not that you have any business playing that high), and the four-piece maple neck's shallow "C" profile and smooth satin finish and bring comfort and class to an instrument that performs well beyond its class.

With the benefits of a 32" scale length intensified on 5-strings, it's a wonder there aren't more direct competitors on the market; we'd bet our bottom dollar there soon will be. In the meantime, Warwick has set the bar high with the RockBass Corvette Basic Medium Scale 5-String. Add to the mix the fact that the bass is available left-handed and/or fretless free of charge, and the bass more than merits an Editors Award.

WARMOTH SHORT SCALE SERIES

For years, Washington's Warmoth Guitars has been offering high-quality, American-made parts for Fender-style bass builds, as well as a number of its own designs. While short-scale bodies and necks aren't new to the company's catalog, it has recently redoubled its efforts in that arena, citing growing interest among players. Warmoth does not sell fully

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assembled instruments, but it sells all the requisite parts (minus strings). To show what's possible, Warmoth sent a customer-built J-style short-scale body along with two of its Warhead necks: a 30"-scale, and a 32"-scale.

With its dual single-coil pickups and iconic silhouette, the inspiration for Warmoth's Short Scale J Bass Body is no secret. The bass arrived in its 32"-scale neck attached, so I wasted no time getting the feel for that configuration. The body contours and pickups felt familiar and sufficiently J-like, but the smaller size made the Warmoth feel somewhat like a cross between a J-Bass and an Ibanez SR-series bass. With both necks, the bass was remarkably easy to play, and it balanced very well both strapped and lapped. For tastes like mine, props to the customer who chose the individual components of the bass; the body/pickguard scheme and Seymour Duncan Antiquity II pickups are classic, and the Gotoh G201 bridge and Schaller BML tuners are worthy upgrades. High five!

Fit and finish were excellent on both the body and necks, though the knobs were a source of consternation, as the J-style knobs were mismatched with the pot shafts; without set screws to tighten them down, they would grip and spin the shaft, but would slip and stutter past the pot's zeroed and dimed positions. Grr. Sonically, both the short- and medium-scale configurations split the difference between a snappy J-like attack and a more woofy, traditional Fender-style short-scale bass.

Subtle differences between the two necks help illustrate Warmoth's range of options. The two necks had a lot in common—maple neck shafts, ebony fingerboards, 10" fingerboard radii, 1.5" widths at the nut—but the vintage tint gloss finish of the medium-scale neck contrasted with the clear nitrocellulose satin finish of the short-scale. Rather than run-of-the-mill maple, the 30" neck boasted a beautiful birdseye figure. I'd be full of it if I claimed it had an impact on the sound, but I have to say that the upgrade made the playing experience different in a meaningful, if purely subjective way.

Warmoth (30" scale)

I'd be hard-pressed to choose a favorite between the two scale lengths; the beauty in the case of the Warmoth is that a single short-scale body accommodates both, and a neck swap requires mere minutes.

Is a full-blown short-scale revolution upon us? Time will tell if players on a large scale will embrace what was once seen as the stuff of student models and toys. If shorties got a bad rap in the past due to shoddy materials and slapdash build quality, those paying attention will realize that perception is indeed outdated, and that there's a growing number of super-hip short- and medium-scale basses. Look for more reviews in the coming months. **BP**

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Fodera Monarch 4 Standard Bass

BY ED FRIEDLAND

THERE ARE HIGH-END BASSES, AND THEN, THERE'S FODERA. WITH AN ARTIST roster that is quite literally a who's who of modern electric bass giants, the company has been a dominant force in the world of custom instruments for the past 30 years. Fodera's craftsmanship, tone, and playability have set the highest standards, and along with that quality and prestige comes a hefty price tag. However, with an almost 13-month wait for a custom build, it seems cost is not a deterrent for those that must have a Fodera bass. The new Monarch 4 Standard bass is Fodera's bid to make the spendy lumber more accessible, and while still not exactly cheap, it represents a significant bargain when compared to the custom models. But, is it worth it?

The Monarch 4 was Fodera's first model, and is still one of its most popular offerings. A custom build presents a wide range of choices, but the Standard-series basses have set parameters, allowing them to be built in batches. They are still handmade by Fodera's luthiers in Brooklyn, New York, and feature the same top-quality woods, hardware, and components as their more expensive cousins—in this case, "standard" does not mean bare bones. The Monarch 4 Standard is spec'd with a medium-weight ash body, AAAAA bi-color flame-maple top, one-piece quartersawn bolt-on Hard Rock maple neck (with a non-angled headstock), and an old-growth pau ferro fingerboard that houses 24 large frets. Two Fodera Dual Coil pickups and a Fodera/Pope Standard Internal preamp endow the M4S with a powerfully versatile system that can switch seamlessly between single and dual-coil modes. The gold-colored Fodera non-locking bridge, Gotoh tuners, and brass nut form a functional and attractive hardware package.

You can feel the expertise of Fodera's woodworkers in the crisp lines of the contoured body, airtight neck pocket, and sturdy-feeling J-profile neck. The electronics package is equally first-rate—the preamp has master volume (with concentric passive tone), blend, concentric bass/treble, and midrange controls. The factory default has the low-mids centered at 330Hz, switchable to 450Hz with a jumper attached to the circuit board. A high-mid board is optional, focusing the boost/cut at 1.8kHz, or a stackable high/low-mid control is available as an upgrade. The EQ provides all the staple requirements we bassists need: bottom, punch, clarity, and sparkle—boost or cut, and with a degree of transparency that lets the wood's voice come through. Fodera's dual-coil pickups are perfectly matched to this system, and I particularly liked how switching from single to dual coil mode doesn't cause a volume spike. This allows you to use the tonal character of each mode without having to make adjustments at the amp. Two mini-toggles switch between active/passive and single/dual coil operation.

I'll admit, I've had persistent feelings of unrequited lust for Fodera's stable of beauties for many years, but alas—on the salary of a humble bass journalist, they never seemed within my reach. And while the street price of the M4S represents many (many) articles for BP, it feels attainable. (Mr. Editor, is this a good time to ask about that raise?) Yes, the sub-$5K price point is still a big commitment for most of us, but if you're content with the wood selections (specifically chosen for their time-tested performance and compatibility), you can comfort yourself knowing that this instrument is on par with custom Monarchs costing thousands more.

Cranking the M4S through my home reference system (a Genz Benz Streamliner 900/Uber 212 rig), I was struck with the axe's immediacy. This baby has turbo-like response,

and it plays with alarming ease. My first try felt similar to removing ankle weights after a few days and going for a jog—it was almost too easy. After acclimating to the instrument's sensitivity, I found that even played with a super-light touch, gobs of low-end punch were at my command. While some boutique axes trade off sexy woods and bling for the pure fundamental *whomp* that you get from a "plain old" Fender bass, I was happy to find the M4S produced a satisfying thump reminiscent of a winning round of Whack-a-Mole. And while the M4S proved its worthiness as a workhorse, it also issues a challenge: "I can go wherever you want—can you hang?" Single-coil mode activates the two outer coils, and placed in '70s Jazz Bass territory, I heard the distinct, modern slap tone that launched a thousand hits. Switching to dual-coil operation, the tone got more complex and fuller in the low midrange, but the high end still shone through with clarity. I was impressed with the precise articulation and evenness throughout the three-plus octave range. There are no bad notes to be found on this bass (unless you play one).

The Fodera M4S is a stunning handmade bass with a champion's pedigree and a prizefighter's guts. It's not inexpensive, but when compared to other instruments in its class, it stands out for both its value and usefulness. **BP**

SPECIFICATIONS

FODERA

MONARCH 4 STANDARD
Street $4,750
Pros Responsive, versatile, first-class build quality
Cons None
Bottom Line The Fodera Standard series offers the same quality as the company's custom models at a lower price, with a much shorter wait.

Contact fodera.com

SPECS

Construction Bolt-on
Body Ash
Top AAAAA flame maple
Neck Maple
Fingerboard Pau Ferro
Pickups Fodera Dual-Coil
Preamp Fodera/Pope
Controls Volume/passive tone, pickup blend, bass/treble, mid, passive/active switch, coil tap
Tuners Gotoh
Nut Brass
Width at nut 1.53"
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Z.Vex Basstortion
Electro-Harmonix Deluxe Bass Big Muff Pi

BY E.E. BRADMAN

WHAT IT IS ABOUT FUZZ, OVERDRIVE, AND DISTORTION? OUR ATTRACTION to the full range of sizzling, brash frequencies makes perfect sense, especially in a world where guitarists hardly ever use clean tone, but these three effects have been known to kill low end—our bread, butter, meat, and potatoes—faster than a speeding bullet. While players with roadies and bigger budgets dedicate entirely separate rigs to their clean and overdriven tones, I'm always on the lookout for pedals that offer a variety of distorted tones without taking away my low frequencies. Fortunately, the last few years have seen an explosion of nasty, grainy pedals specifically made for bassists. Z.Vex's Basstortion box and the Deluxe Bass Big Muff Pi from Electro-Harmonix are two of the latest additions to the fold.

CRUNCHETTY-CRUNCH

The Basstortion is Z.Vex's bass-tastic version of their Distortron distortion pedal. Released last year, this little monster is modeled on the sound of an Ampeg SVT getting pushed to the max, and everything it does is a variation on that theme.

I started by turning up the VOLUME to match my unaffected tone, and I dug how the Basstortion could also function as a pretty cool clean boost. Opening up the TONE control added top end, and the DRIVE knob took me from subtle sizzle to polite fuzz to thick overdrive all the way to crucially cracklin' crunch.

With Bartolini-loaded passive Jazz and Precision Frankensteins played through a Yamaha PB1 preamp, a Symantec 501 compressor, and a QSC RMX2450 power amp pushing two Acme Low B 2x10s, the Basstortion was raggedy and impressively dynamic; it was more focused than I expected,

SPECIFICATIONS

Z. VEX

BASSTORTION
Street $200
Pros Pumps out tube-like analog warmth
Cons Sideways form factor might frustrate some
Bottom line The Zvex despises subtlety and delivers aggressive, analog crunch.

Contact zvex.com

ELECTRO-HARMONIX

DELUXE BASS BIG MUFF PI
Street $120
Pros Crossover feature, high- and low-pass filters
Cons Large footprint
Bottom line Bursting with options, the Deluxe Bass Big Muff is a worthy inheritor of the classic Big Muff sound.

Contact ehx.com

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and it did a great job of delivering warm tone that screamed organic. With an active Ernie Ball Music Man SUB, the results were a bit smoother and not as detailed or crunchy, but tweaking the SUB's tone control and messing with the Basstortion's BRIGHT/DARK switch helped me get closer to something I liked.

The differences between the Basstortion's BRIGHT and DARK settings are subtle but still effective. Flipping the switch to the DARK side cuts off high frequencies, but those frequencies gave me tones I couldn't get from opening up the TONE control. After an initial period of being intimidated by the Basstortion's single-minded intensity, I fell in love with it.

FILTER FREAKINESS

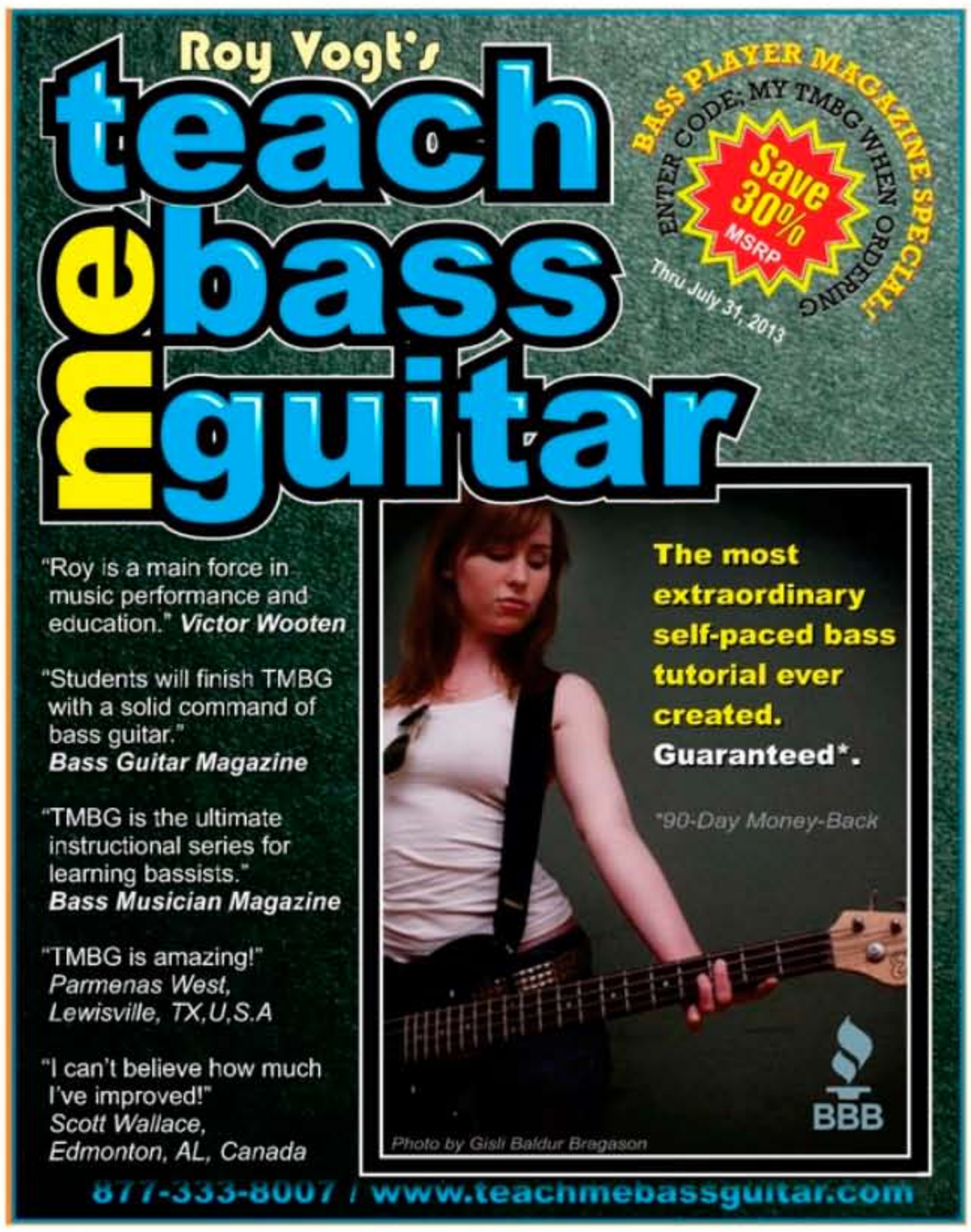
In some ways, the Deluxe Bass Big Muff Pi is the exact opposite of the Z.Vex; it takes up twice as much real estate, it offers many more options, and it specializes in a distortion that would never be mistaken for tubes.

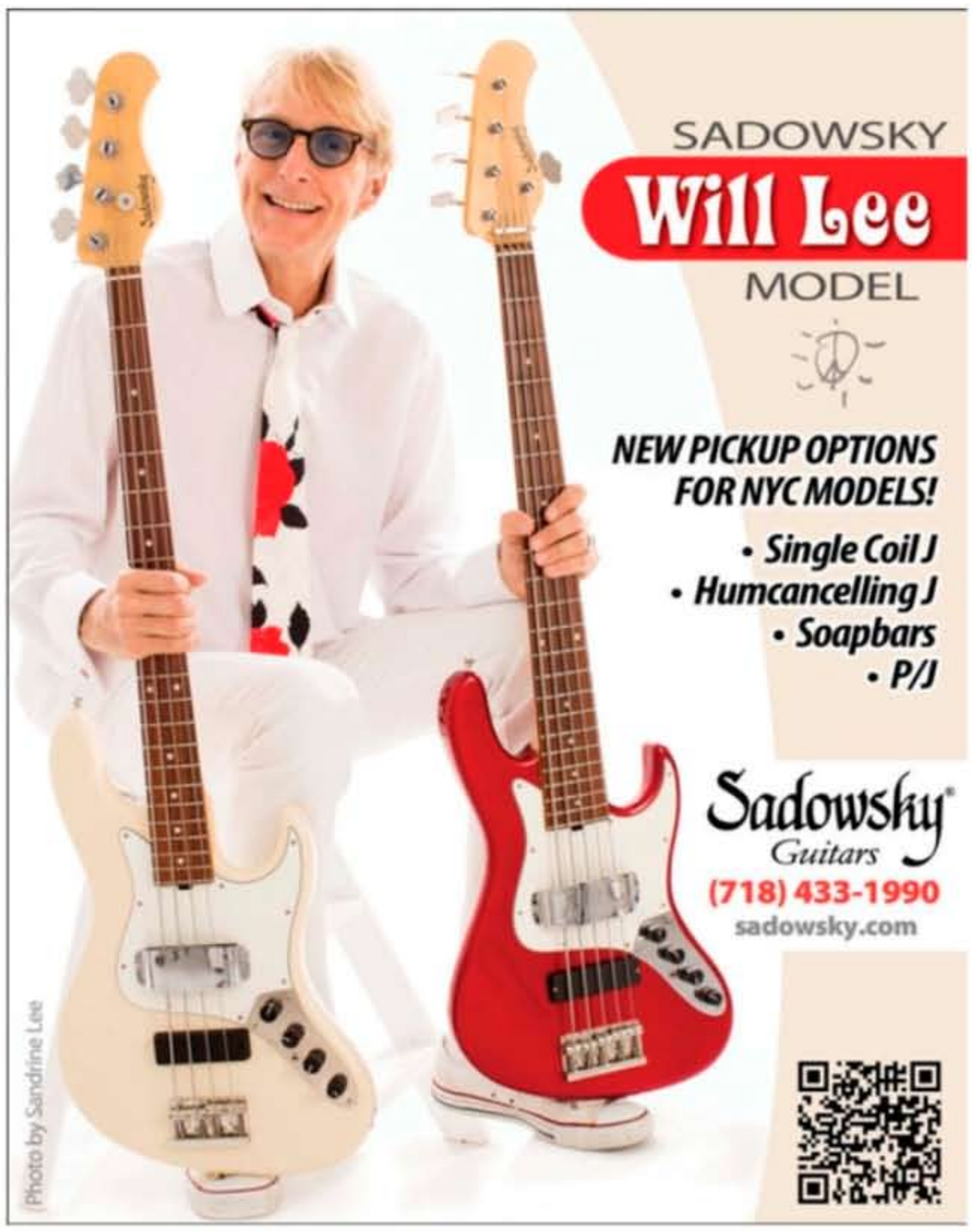
Fans of previous iterations of the Big Muff will note the addition of a few extra pieces to this Pi. The new pedal shares its predecessors' circuitry, as well as its SUSTAIN and TONE controls, and it adds a wet/dry BLEND, a GATE control, a -10dB input pad for active basses, a DI output, VOLUME, a direct output for sending dry signal to a secondary signal chain, and a buffered bypass with extended low-frequency response.

Thanks to the TONE control, dialing up just the right amount of nastiness and top end was a snap, and the GATE came in handy for the hot EMG preamp and pickups in my Lodestone 5-string. The SUSTAIN control made a huge difference in whether my effected tone was in the background or up front. Players who like to keep their clean and dirty signals separate will the direct out (which sends dry signal) and output (which sends effected signal, as does the DI output).

The real stars of this pedal, however, are the CROSSOVER footswitch control and the high- and low-pass filter knobs, which control cutoff frequency ranges. When I plugged in my '62 Jazz, stepped on the CROSSOVER, and slowly turned up the HPF knob, I started dirty (125Hz) and eventually reached sine-wave territory (1.75Hz); turning up the LPF knob, allowed me to make the effected tone jump out by diiming the cutoff frequency range from 60Hz to 10Hz. The high-pass filter gave me crunchy tone that cut through while still maintaining low end, and the low-pass filter added mids and focus. This pedal's controls allowed me to dial in a surprisingly wide range of tones, and I could've spent several more hours exploring the possibilities.

The Basstortion and Deluxe Bass Big Muff Pi offer two distinct takes on distortion, both of which have their strengths and limitations. If you're looking for a kind of grind you can leave on for an entire tune—or longer—the Basstortion emulates the sound of an SVT being driven hard quite well. If a more in-your-face fuzz is what you seek, the Deluxe Bass Big Muff Pi takes the legendary sound of the Big Muff and adds key features in its CROSSOVER and filters. Both American-made stompboxes are worthy additions to any would-be rocker's signal chain. **BP**





WOODSHED

JAZZ CONCEPTS

The Groove Factory

Part One

BY JOHN GOLDSBY

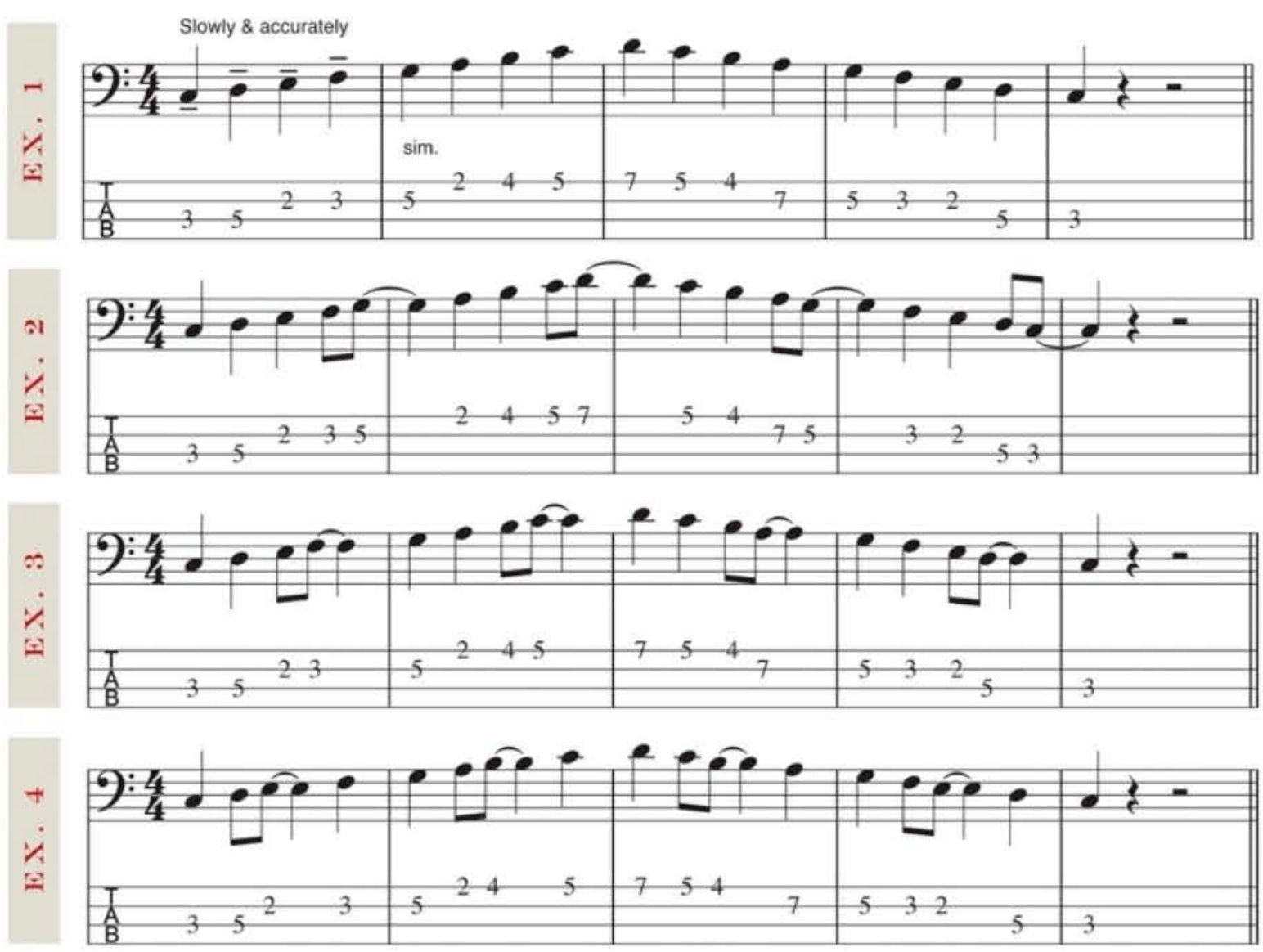
PIANIST ETHAN IVERSON WROTE, "THE PHRASE 'The Sound of Jazz' is bandied about sometimes. Well, for me, 'The Sound of Jazz' is Ron Carter playing four beats in a row." When I read Iverson's blog post and interview with Ron Carter, I started thinking about how Mr. Carter creates his groove, and what we can practice to improve our own grooves. Bassists know that the player who grooves will work the most. Bassists also know that a groove grows from a magical combination of attack, sustain, and release. Whether jazz, rock, country, or funk, there is always a basic pulse, and we create a groove by stating parts of that rhythmic pulse—playing notes—and implying other parts of the pulse by added rests.

Example 1 shows the *C* major scale, up to the 9th (the note *D* on top) and back down. The lines above the notes in bar 1 are tenuto markings, indicating that the notes should be held for their full value, almost connected to the note that follows. The "sim." marking in bar 2 is short for *simile*, which means you should continue to articulate the notes in a similar way. Check out the link online to see a Ron Carter workshop where he is just playing major scales. Watching Carter play makes it clear that a simple major scale can also have a rhythmic vibe.

This scale is easy to play, but how can we make it feel good? Let's look at the tools that we have in our groove factory. The compelling rhythmic groove and the warm, pleasant sound that we want to hear comes from a combination of left-hand pressure on the string and right-hand attack on the note. Another important component is how long we hold each note before the next attack. Dynamic variation—how loud each note is in relation to the other notes—is an additional important ingredient in the groove recipe.

Left-hand pressure + Right-hand attack + Left- & right-hand coordination + Lengths of notes + Dynamics = GROOVE

Ideally, every note should flow into the next note, only stopped or cut off by the attack of the new note. We can finesse the release of



a note by stopping a millisecond before the full value of the note. The cutoff, or short space at the end of a note, also influences how a groove feels.

Do not make the common mistake of cutting notes too short when you change strings or shift your left hand to a new position. You should be able to play an entire scale with almost no perceptible space between any of the notes. Only then can you consistently control whether you choose to add a small gap at the end of a note to emphasize the groove you create.

Example 2 shows the *C* major scale with a slight rhythmic variation: You play the *G* on the "and" of beat *four*, creating a pushed feeling into the second bar. You can play this exercise with either a swing (triplet) rhythmic feeling, or a straight-eighth-note feeling. The trick is not only pushing the *G* on the "and" of *four*, but also landing squarely on the *A* on beat *two* in the second bar. Trust me, this little detail is what separates newbs from groove monsters.

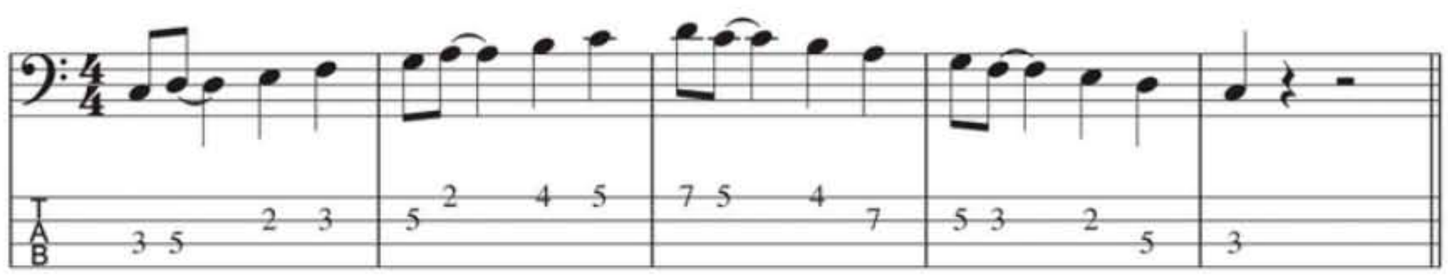
Any bassist can push beat *four*, but only the groove monsters will land squarely on beat *two* in the following measure. Check this out with your metronome, play it with your computer sequencer, and by all means ask your drummer to indulge you and play this little four-bar exercise with you.

In **Examples 3–5**, the "pushed" note is moved ahead to the "and" of *three*, the "and" of *two*, and the "and" of *one*. Each variation adds a different dimension to the rhythmic feeling. You might notice, for example, that you have no problem with Ex. 2, but when playing Ex. 5 you have a hard time playing the "and" of *two* and then landing squarely on beat *three*.

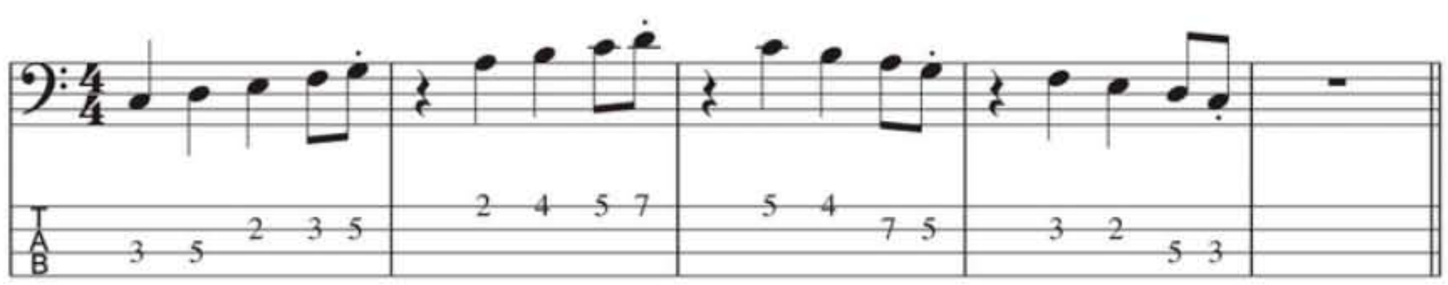
Now that you have a strong grasp of the rhythmic variations, let's add a mysterious element to the mix: space. **Example 6** shows the same scale pattern as Ex. 2, except that there is a quarter-note rest on beat *one* of bars 2, 3, and 4. **Example 7** is the same as Ex. 3, except for the quarter-note rest on beat *four* of bars 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Next time, we'll look at more tools in the groove factory. In the meantime, keep your ears open and your rhythms precise. **BP**

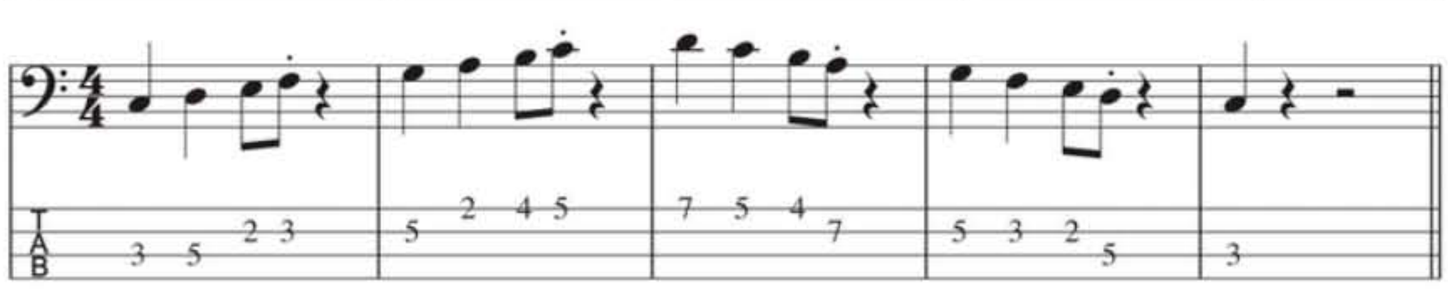
EX. 5



EX. 6



EX. 7



For Practice Demons Only

Want to dig deeper and work out on all possible variations of Examples 1–7?

1. Play the scale at various tempos, from slow to fast.
2. Play the scale starting on the top note, going down the scale and then back up. Try starting on the 9th of the scale at the top (one note above the root) and going down.
3. Play the scale up and down on only one or two strings.
4. Play the examples in all 12 keys.
5. Play the rhythms using different types of scales, e.g., Dorian minor, Mixolydian, melodic minor, diminished, etc.

JOHN GOLDSBY

INFO

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BLUES YOU CAN USE

Jack Bruce's British Blues

BY ED FRIEDLAND

WHILE EXAMINING THE WORK OF GREAT BLUES BASSISTS of the past, let's not forget our brethren from across the pond, in particular, the contributions of British blues players. The influence of American blues on the U.K. music scene was pivotal in the development of rock & roll; virtually every famous British rock band got its start by copping tunes by Muddy Waters and Willie Dixon, as well as the first wave of American rockers such as Carl Perkins and Elvis Presley.

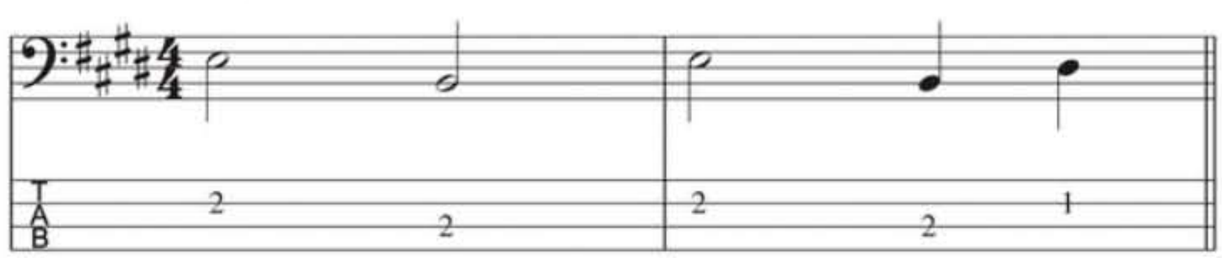
This month's focus is on Jack Bruce, who as a member of the English group Cream, became one of the most high-profile bassists of his generation. Along with bandmates Eric Clapton and drum maniac Ginger Baker, the trio forged a style heavily soaked in the blues tradition, with a big spoonful of psychedelic sauce thrown in for good measure. While Bruce's work with Cream has been well examined over the years, I thought it would be fun to look at some of his earlier work with the Graham Bond Organisation, a jazz/blues outfit that also featured future Cream percussionist Baker.

The recording of "Big Boss Man" from the band's 1964 recording *Live at Klook's Kleek* is as raw as it gets in terms of audio quality and performance, but it gives an interesting peek into the earliest moments of blues/rock fusion, and is prototypical of the treatment many of the blues classics would receive in the coming decade. The classic Jimmy Reed version of this tune features a straightforward country blues shuffle—essentially half-notes playing a simple root-5 line, like in **Ex 1**. But over the years, this song has received several different treatments, ranging from the pumping straight rock offered up by the Yardbirds (with Eric Clapton on guitar), to the lazy shuffle of the Grateful Dead's version. The bass line in particular has been variable throughout the many recordings of this tune—some choose to stay close to the original country feel, while some approach it with a shuffle rhythm played in varying patterns—either box-shaped or a "boogie" line (1-3-5-6-8-6-5-3). One common approach has the bass bringing out a melodic line that is prominent in the guitar part, starting on the 5th of the chord and walking up to the ♭7, as shown in **Ex. 2**. Well, the live Graham Bond version offers another take on this idea, with Jack Bruce using the same basic rhythm as Ex. 2, but the line starts on the root of the chord and walks up to the ♭3 instead. It's an unusual approach to the tune, but it's easy to understand why Bruce would want to start his line on the root. By emphasizing the ♭3 in the bass line, the tune develops a decidedly "nasty" vibe, and with the provided straight eighth-note rock feel, the performance is a precursor to the "groovy" British rock that was to follow.

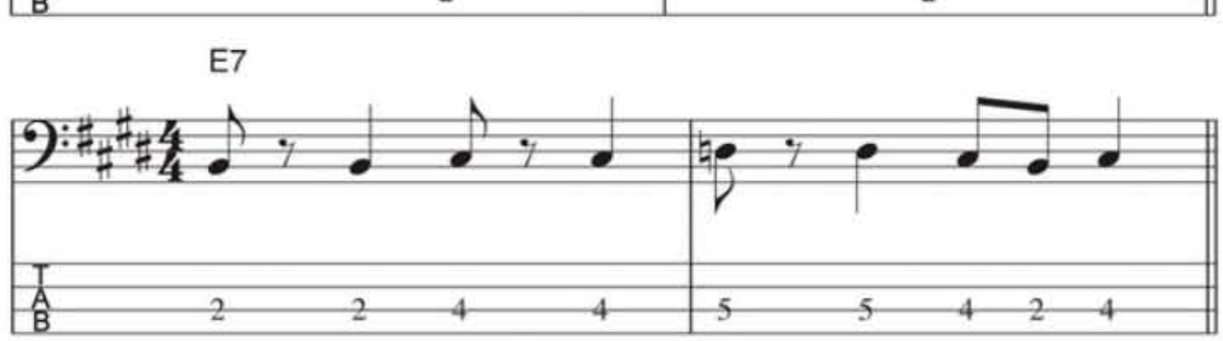
Example 3 [on page 62] is an approximation of Bruce's line on the recording, at least during the vocal section—during the solos, his line gets somewhat buried in the mix due to the primitive nature of the session. The rhythm is written as straight eighth-notes, but the line is articulated with a "short-long, short-long" feel; try saying "dit-dah, dit-dah" to get the idea. He starts the line on the *E* one octave up from the open *E*. You might wonder why not use the low *E*? Well, in those days, *E* strings were not as consistent as they are today, the recording technology was primitive (this track is a perfect example), and amps were not all that robust, either. Videos of Jack Bruce playing with this band show him using a Fender Bass VI, a short-scale instrument with ultra-skinny strings, and while tuned in the same octave as a standard 4-string, the low *E*, combined with these other factors, was often ineffectual.

There are many other great examples of Jack Bruce's approach to the blues, and in future columns, we will revisit some of his more well known performances. But for this month, dig on the rawness these English chaps brought to the blues, and how they paved the way for the blues/rock explosion of the '60s. **BP**

EX. 1



EX. 2



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ED FRIEDLAND

Ed "The Bass Whisperer" Friedland plays, writes, and teaches out of his bass base in Austin, Texas.
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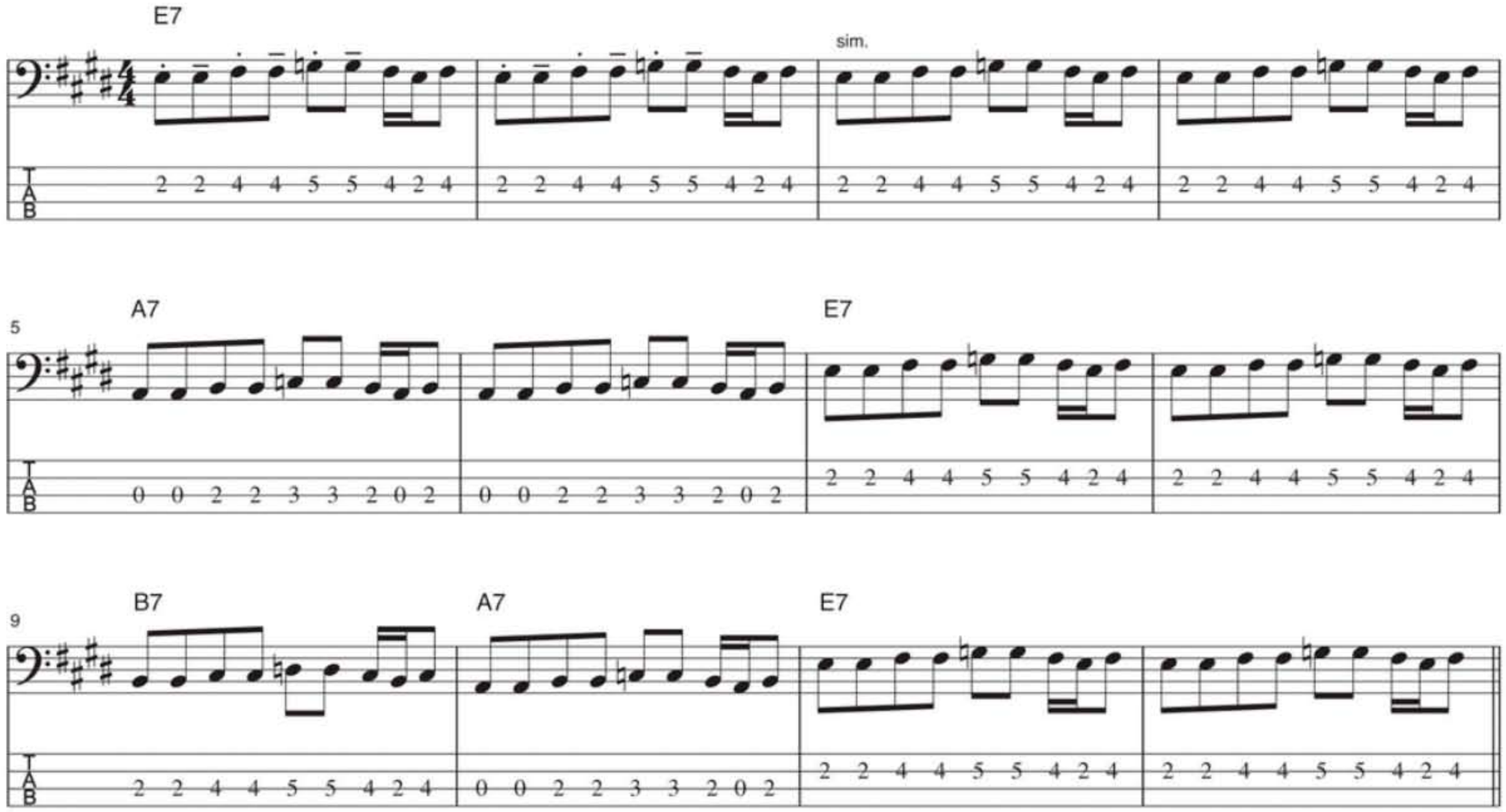
EX. 3


E7
sim.
A7
E7
B7
A7
E7
TAB

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BASSER INSTINCTS

Right-Hand Positioning & Fingerboard Mastery

BY JEFF BERLIN

AS THE DAYS GROW LONGER, SO DO THE amount of questions I get from readers. Therefore, let's jump right in!

Joe wrote, "I have a question regarding right-hand technique, which has been a point of confusion for me. A lot of bassists keep their thumb on the pickup while playing every string, but I can't properly mute the unplayed strings using this method. Another approach I've seen is the movable anchor, where the thumb moves in accordance with the string you're playing. This mutes the strings better, but I was told it is unnecessary movement for the hand. What works best for you?"

Hi Joe. Yours is not a unique situation. Plenty of my bass students seem to have a hard time deciding where to put their thumb and how to mute ringing strings. The left hand also plays a key role in muting strings, but speaking strictly about the right hand, I can suggest that when you play on your low *E* string (assuming you're a 4-string player, as I am), you anchor your thumb on the top of the pickup or the bass body. When you play on the *A* string, you can try to rest your thumb on the *E* string to keep it from ringing unnecessarily. When you play on the *D* string, you can put your thumb on the *A* string, which should nicely mute the *E* string, as well. When you play on the *G* string, just leave your thumb on the *A* string. Your finger plucking the *G* string will automatically fall into the *D* string and mute it. That's all there is to it. It may take a couple of weeks, but you should be pretty comfortable with this method as long as you have good music to practice muting on.

Jim P. wrote, "One of my weak areas is a good understanding of the fingerboard. Any suggestions?"

Hi Jim. You do not have a weak understanding of the fingerboard—nobody does! You have a weak understanding of *music* and how to represent it on the fingerboard. This is why fingerboard exercises don't solve your playing problems; they make the fingerboard the priority, not the musical content, which will help you to learn the fingerboard better. Players are going about learning the fingerboard in a backward manner. The only reason the fingerboard exists is so a player can play notes on it; that's it! So if notes are the first point of regard, rather than the fingerboard itself, what does that basic fact tell you about how to learn it? Give that some thought, and let me know what you come up with.

Ryan wrote, "While you have the right to your opinion, I believe you are thinking for people who wish to think for themselves. If I want to avoid learning music, then you should respect that, because there are a lot of bass players like me. You are a controversial guy with a big ego, and you should not be thinking for other musicians."

Hi Ryan. I appreciate your honest comments. I certainly was motivated by ego in the past, but I do not wish to be motivated in this manner anymore. Instead, I would like to offer my thoughts and allow readers to decide if they agree or not. Of course players can choose whatever academic direction they wish to go in. I want to make sure players have more than one option to consider before choosing between learning proven academic musical content or learning via non-empirical example or live demonstration. I received an email from a bassist who said he didn't want to learn music because it took too long. That tells me the understanding of what learning music really means is lost on this person. It's lost on many people reading this, but it doesn't have to be that way. You will all, without exception, improve if you find a source that teaches music academics to you. This cannot be said if you work on approaches to playing that do not make music academics their core. Thanks for reading this month! **BP**

INFO

JEFF BERLIN

Jeff Berlin has toured and recorded with such artists as Frank Zappa, Bill Bruford, Allan Holdsworth, and Billy Cobham. He has released eight solo albums and is music director at the Players School of Music in Clearwater, Florida. You can reach Jeff with questions or comments on this column at talkingbassnotes@yahoo.com. **playerschool.com**

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"Layla" By Derek & The Dominos

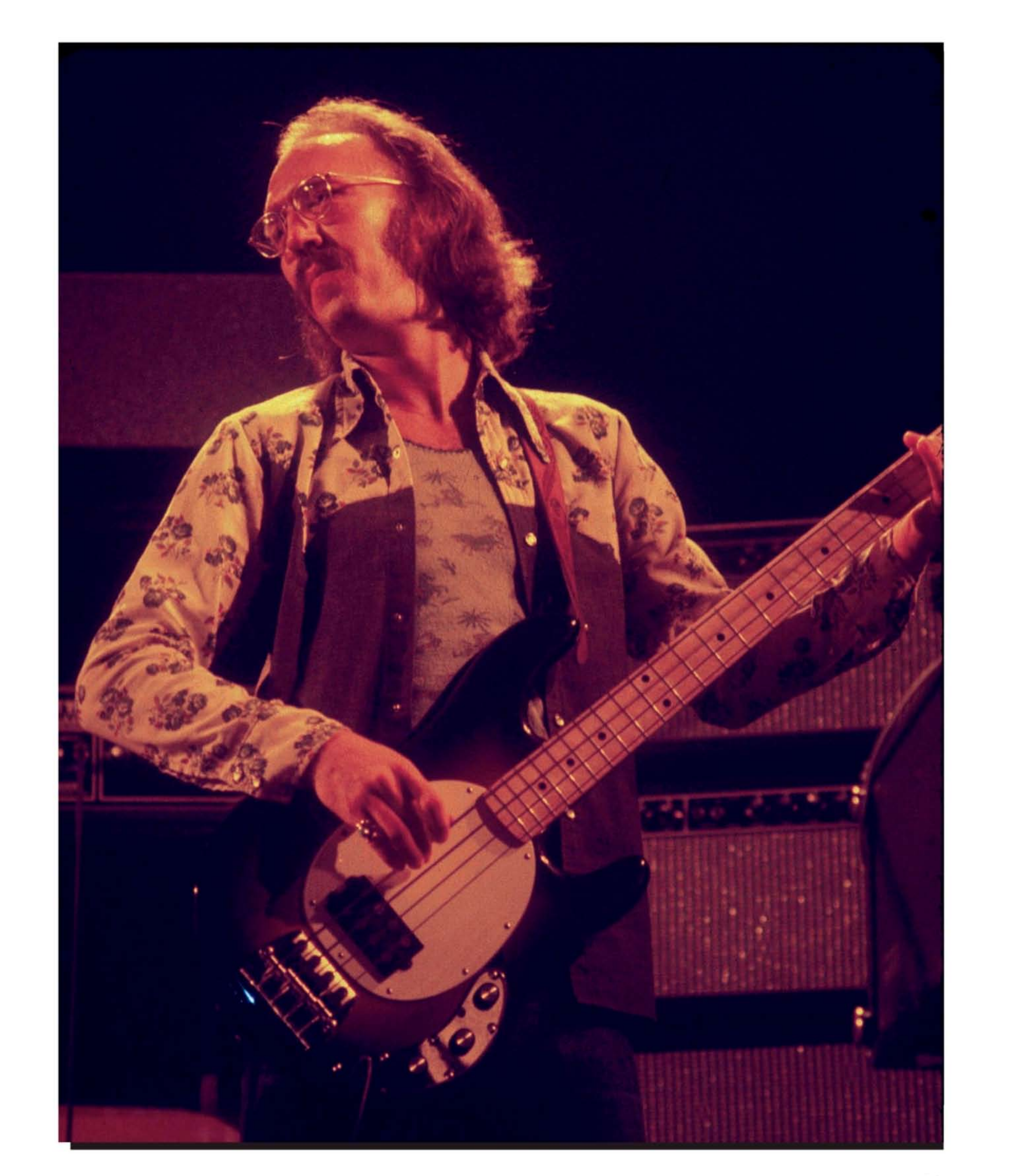
Carl Radle's Complete Bass Line

BY CHRIS JISI | PHOTOGRAPH BY NEIL ZLOZOWER/ATLAS ICONS

PERHAPS MORE THAN ANY MUSICIAN ON A LANDMARK RECORDING, THE bass player can languish in anonymity even long after the song attains classic status. Witness Carl Radle, who from the late '60s to the late '70s grounded such mega-hits as Eric Clapton's "Wonderful Tonight" and "Lay Down Sally," George Harrison's "My Sweet Lord," Leon Russell's "Tightrope," and Delaney & Bonnie's "Never Ending Song of Love," not to mention Joe Cocker's gritty *Mad Dogs and Englishmen* covers. Radle's discerning, flash-free style didn't draw him any additional outside attention, but he had an impact on many bassists—including his peer Jerry Scheff, who credits Radle with changing his concept and teaching him about the elegance of space in the groove.

Radle was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma on the same day as Paul McCartney. He had logged some time on the clarinet, piano, and guitar by the time he picked up a Danelectro bass at age 15—enabling him to do his first gig the very next day! Drawing from the influences of McCartney, Willie Dixon, and Joe Osborn, Radle hooked up with fellow Tulsa native Russell, eventually heeding his advice to move to Los Angeles. Quickly established, Carl balanced his big-time rock credits with bottom for Gary Lewis & the Playboys, J.J. Cale, John Lee Hooker, Freddie King, Buddy Guy, Sergio Mendes, Dr. John, and King Curtis, before the cumulative effects of alcohol and drugs led to his dying from kidney disease in 1980, at age 37.

No Radle performance alludes to his versatility better than Derek & the Dominos' "Layla." Clapton's 1970 song about his unrequited love for George Harrison's wife, Patti Boyd—made all the more poignant by the haunting piano coda written and played by drummer Jim Gordon—Radle reveals his rock, R&B, and melodic sensibilities beneath the immortal pairing of guitar gods Clapton and Duane Allman. The sessions took place at Miami's Criteria Studios Room B in early September 1970, with the four joined by keyboardist/guitarist Bobby Whitlock (who maintains that he did a take of the piano part, with producer/engineer Tom Dowd combining his and Gordon's takes for the released version). Radle, who plucked with



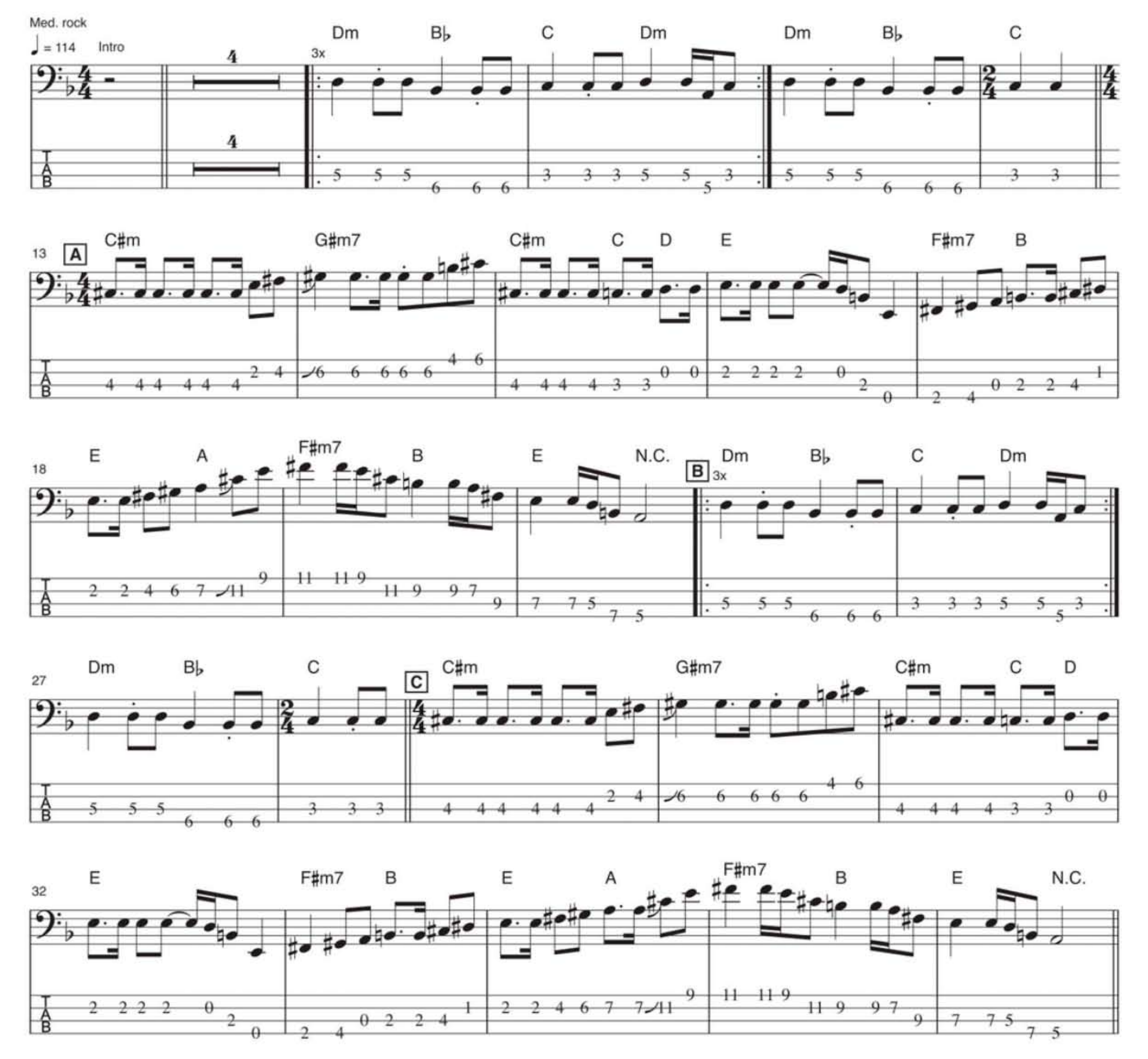
two fingers and occasionally his thumb, likely played his Fender Precision Bass with a Jazz Bass neck, strung with Ernie Ball flatwounds and recorded direct and through a Fender Bassman amp, with mostly the direct signal used. The song was actually three separately recorded parts spliced together: The blues-rock opening section, Gordon's solo piano, and the last section, with the band coming back in to play to the piano track. The first section was recorded in *F* (*Dm*) and the piano sections were recorded in *C*—however, the tape was sped up slightly to make the keys sound closer to *F♯ (D♯m)*, and *C♯*. Tune your bass slightly sharp to duplicate how Radle played his part.

The song opens with four bars of Allman's regal riff, doubled by Clapton. Entering with support at bar 5 are Gordon's drums and Radle, whose quarter-note-on-the-downbeat pattern anchors the soaring dual guitars (and guitar overdubs). With the guitars paring way back for the vocal entrance at Letter **A** (verse 1), Radle ups his motion via double-time-implying funky syncopation. He then shows his keen melodic side in bar 17 with a harmonically astute ascending line through the chord changes that peaks at the high *F♯* in 19. For the corresponding next two bars he descends via three jazzy drops—possibly the result of his being a fan of Ray Brown and Stanley Clarke. As Radle told *Guitar Player* in August 1976, when asked about his role with Clapton, "I'm doing both rhythm and countermelody at the same time. I consider myself the connection between, say, Eric and the drums. Melodically, I'm going to listen to him, but my responsibility is really with the rhythm section." The chorus (**B**), second verse (**C**), second chorus (**D**), third verse (**E**), and the extended third chorus/guitar solos (**F**) closely follow the formula Radle set forth in the intro and first verse, adding stability to the song.

Letter **G**'s solo piano initiates the song's second half. With the band poised to enter at **H**, Radle unleashes a slide-filled pentatonic pickup, perhaps a nod to the influence of Joe Osborn's smooth, slide-laden style. For 16 bars he establishes a legato, melodic pace, heavy on tone and expressive phrasing, which is particularly ear-catching in bars 108–109, 111, 113, 116–117, and 119. At letter **I** (the B section of the piano coda), in the second half of bars 122, 124, and 126, Radle matches the rhythm of the ascending melody exactly, while countering it with a descending line. More of his McCartney influence? Letter **J** mirrors **H**, with a few more slides applied, and **K** duplicates **I**. Finally, **L**'s extended outro remains consistent with **H**, boosted by the return of such subtleties as scoops and the long and short notes Radle used so effectively in the song's first half. While Carl Radle undoubtedly deserves wider recongnition, one of the best ways to pay homage is to play his "Layla" bass line with the relaxed feel and seeing-eye melodicism with which it was created. **BP**

"Layla" By Derek & The Dominos

Transcription by Chris Jisi



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37 D 3x Dm B♭ C Dm Dm B♭ C E C#m

46 G#m7 C#m C D E F#m7 B E A

51 F#m7 B E N.C. F 19x Dm B♭ C Dm Dm B♭

92 C G 11 C H C C/E F

109 B♭9 C

115 C/E F B♭9 C

122 I Am Dm G C Am D G

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129 J C C/E F C

135 C/E F B♭9 C

141 C/E F B♭9

147 C C/E F

153 B♭9 C

158 K Am Dm G C Am D

164 G C C/E F

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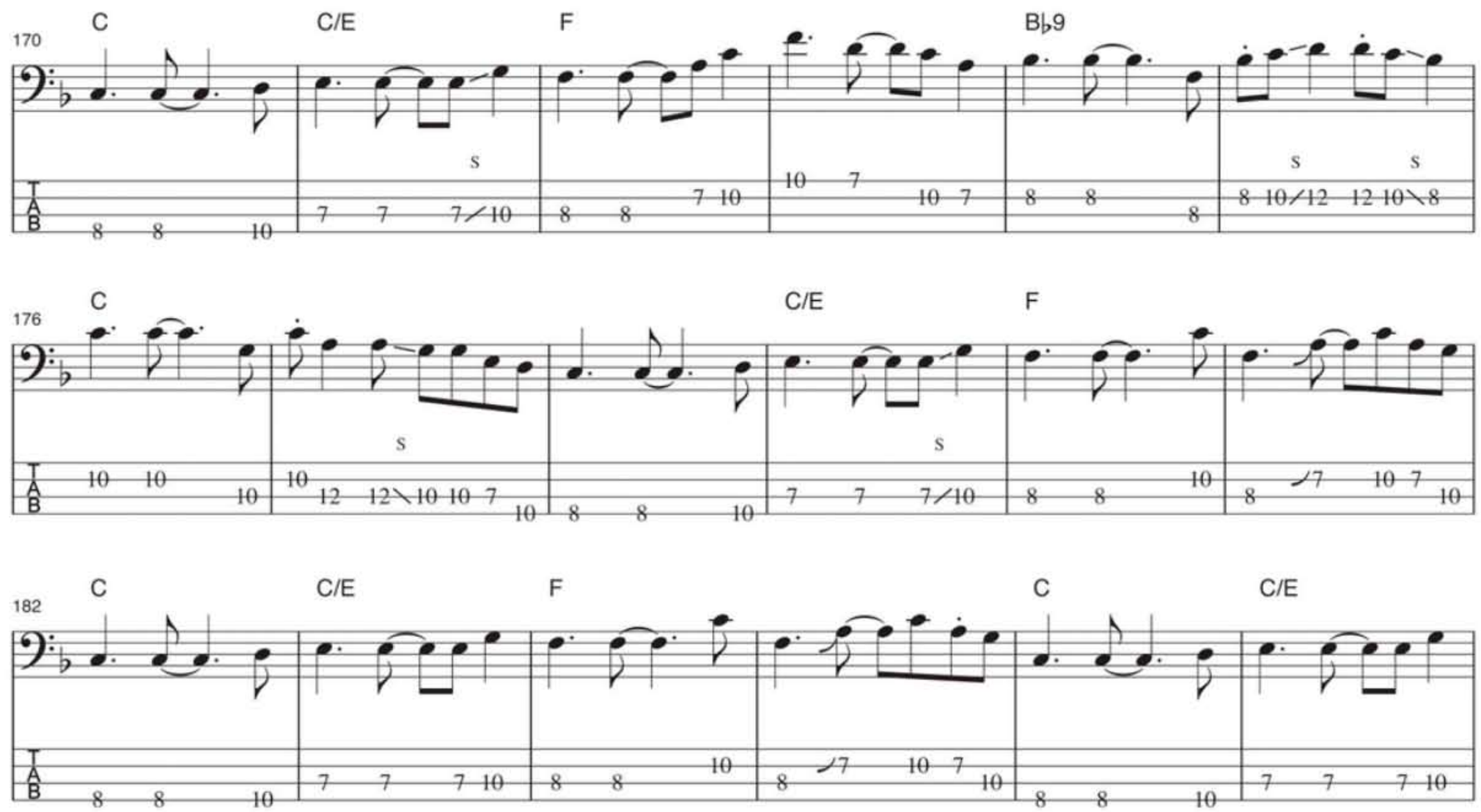
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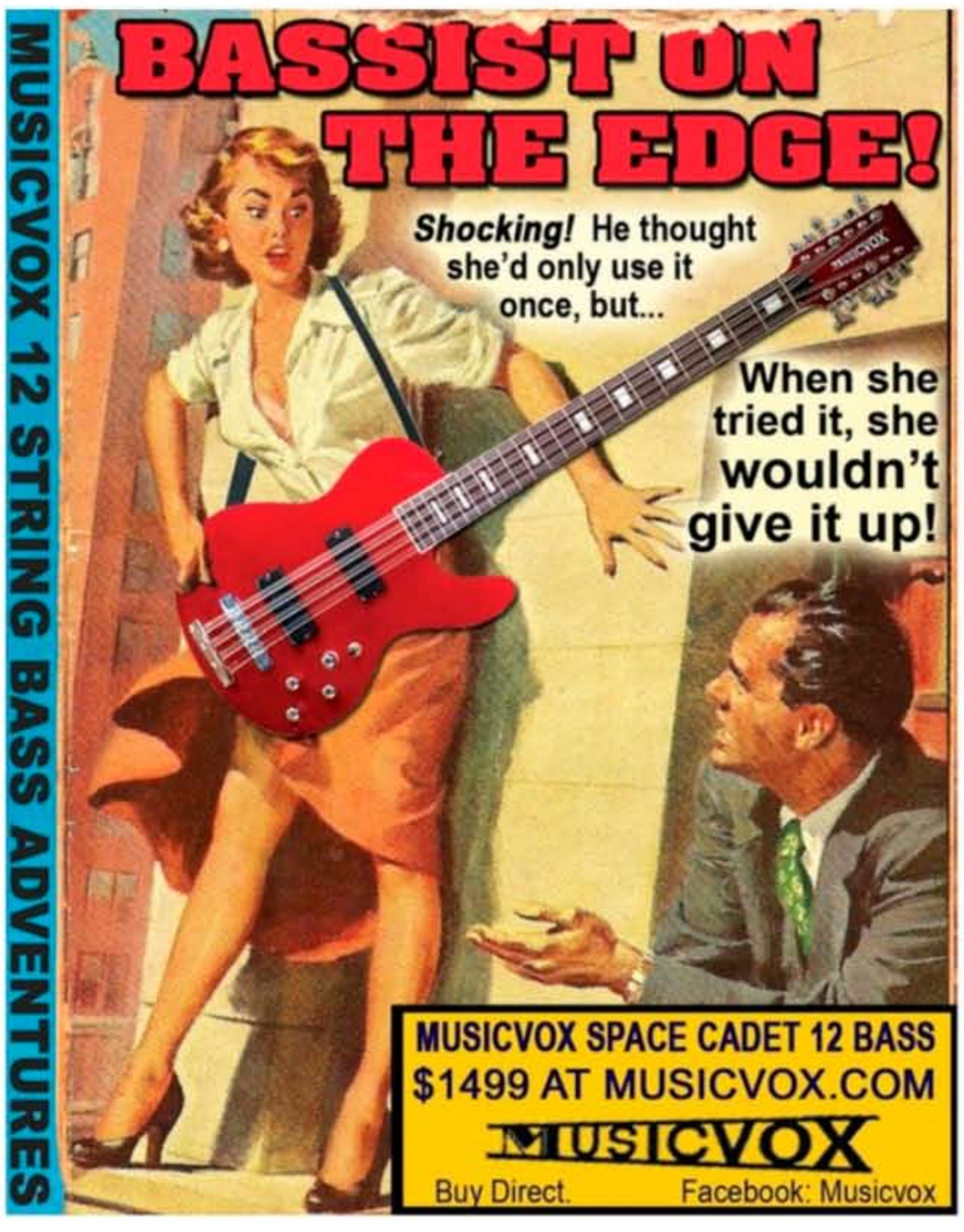
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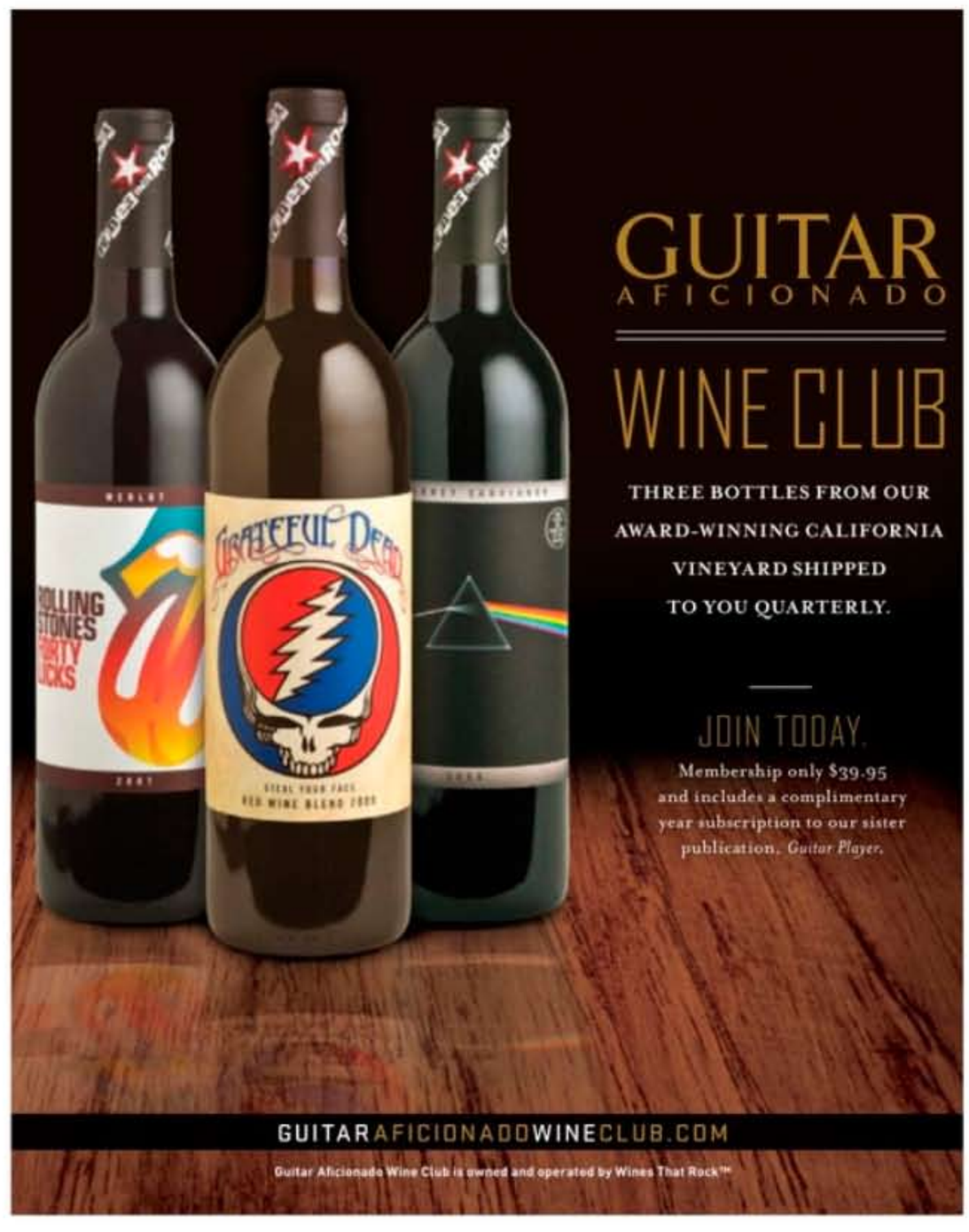
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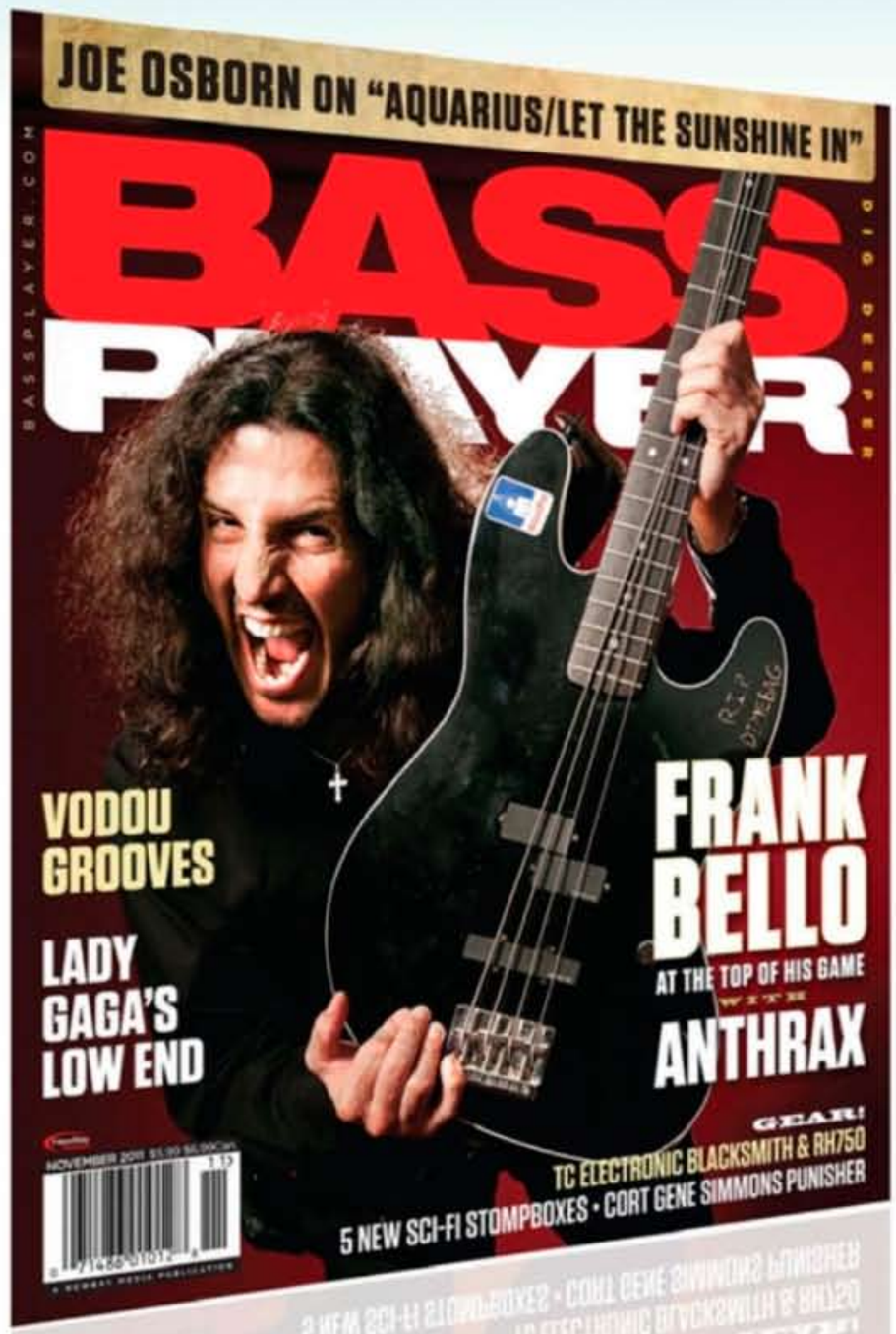

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188 F C C/E F

193 C C/E F

197 B♭9 C

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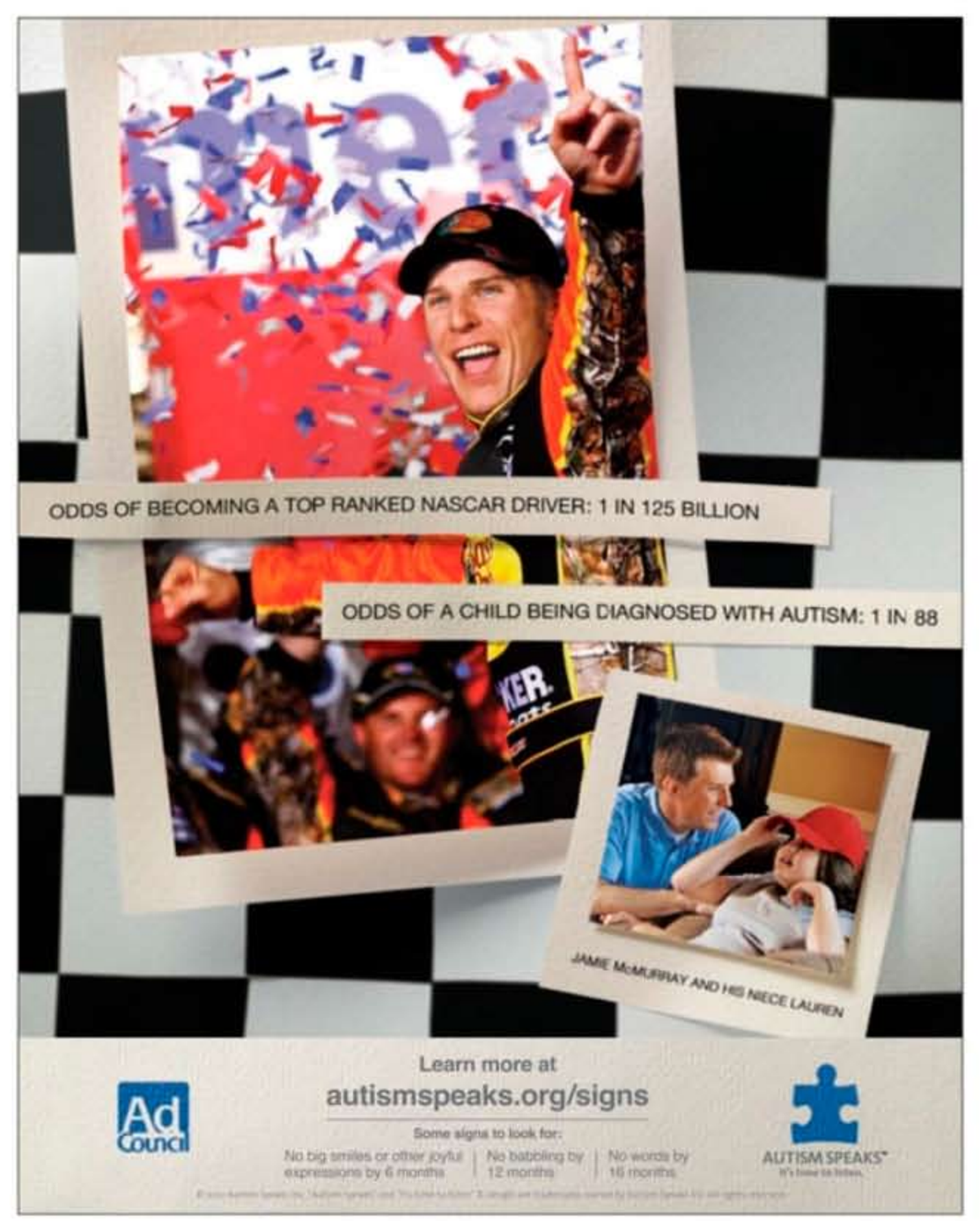

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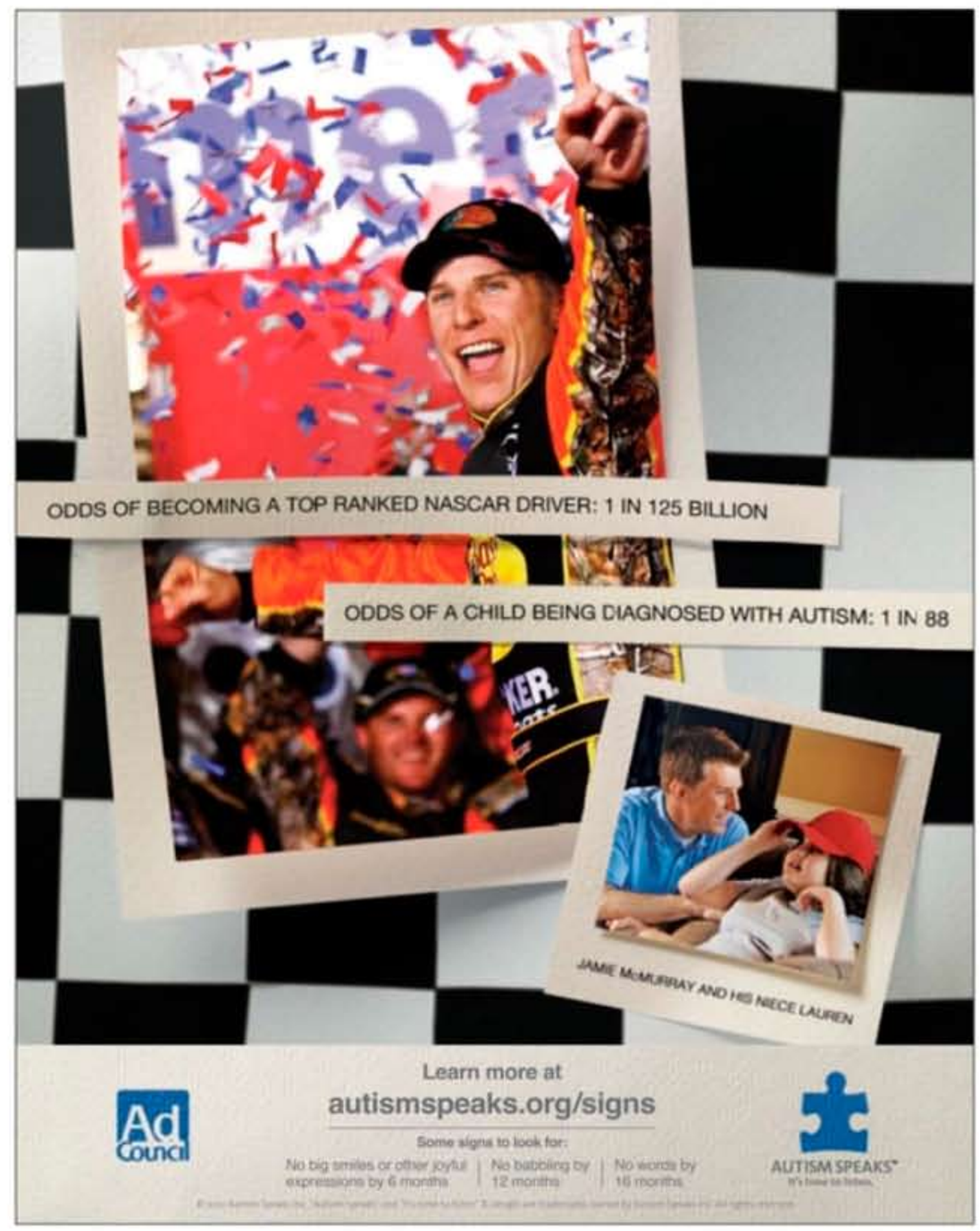

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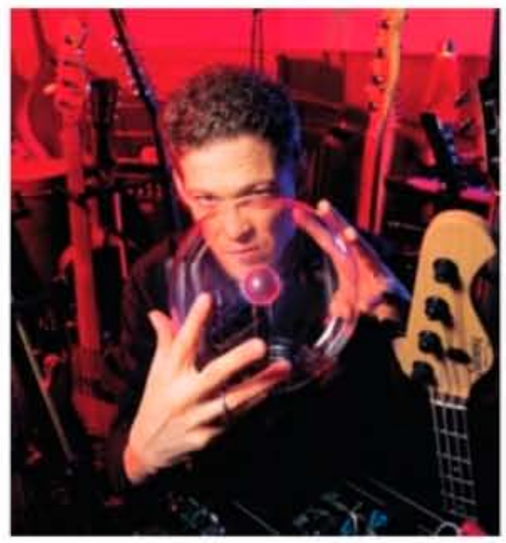
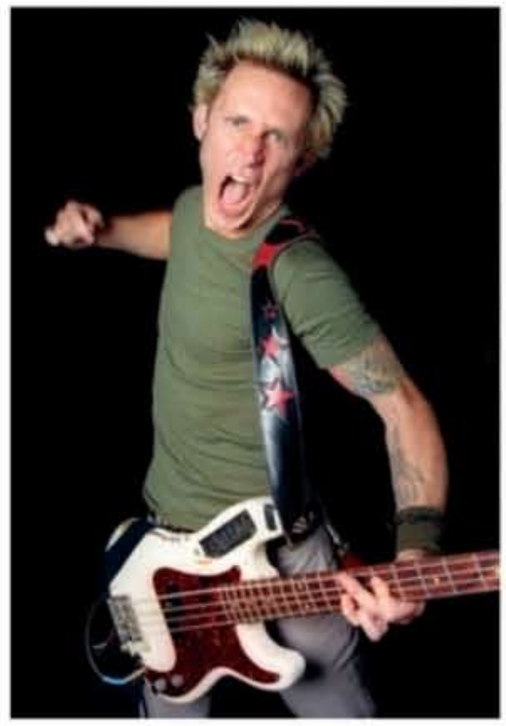
Over the past 20-plus years with Bass Player, *Art Director and photographer Paul Haggard has accumulated a shelf full of broken cameras and some dusty memories. He will recount some over the next few columns until either he can't remember any more, or they fail to be interesting—whichever comes first.*





Clockwise from top left: Les Claypool, John Patitucci, Charnett Moffett, Victor Wooten, Robert Trujillo, Timothy B. Schmit, Mike Dirnt, Jason Newsted. Center: Michael Anthony

OUTTAKES

Photographic moments from over the years.

IT COMES DOWN TO A MOMENT. OR RATHER, IT COMES DOWN to the anticipation of said moment, because in terms of photography, once the moment happens, it *has* happened. Gone. Finito. Expired. Photographers are hunter–voyeurs who peek through a little keyhole into the room where all the magical visual elements come together to form a two dimensional plane. And those elements can be magic, or perhaps merely a magic instant assembled from an infinite menu of possible combinations. There are angles, and fields of focal depth, anticipation and release, and textures, times, history, and mood, to say nothing of color, light, and shadow. Take your pick; mix and match. There are really no rules except to try and break the rules.

All of these variables, and thousands more potentially important possibilities, exist in three dimensions for us hunter–voyeurs to twist and wrangle and pull through our lenses to form the 2-D compositional dramas that play out inside the camera's little room, until we release the shutter—and a moment unlike any other is preserved forever.

If the subject happens to be a living, breathing human being, multiply the list of possibilities by factors of experience, naïvete, anxiety, confidence, hubris, trepidation, happiness, sadness, fear, hatred, or bravado. The result can be any of a billion possibilities. It is the job of the photographer to assemble his or her moment from this menu.

There are a couple of means to that end: careful, planned and calculated, responsible photography, where expert knowledge of the medium is paramount in the patient craft of image—or the wanton, scattershot approach, involving hundreds of exposures and the desperate hope that random spontaneity will create something unique and exciting. Try to guess which one *I* use.

Whichever the style, the moment will be decisive. It will pass before your eyes and then be gone. It is up to the photographer to capture it from the world inside the keyhole and call it art. —PAUL HAGGARD

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